



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT  
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## COUNCIL MOVES TO OVERRIDE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE IN CHALLENGING LINE-ITEM VETO AUTHORITY

Tomorrow, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee will hold a special session to discuss overriding, limiting and amending the line-item veto authority of the President of the Navajo Nation.

"There is nothing to debate tomorrow. The line-item veto authority was given to the President directly by the People, only the People can limit and clarify this authority. This is not a question for the Navajo Nation Council, this is a question only the Navajo people can answer. I have asked in my veto message that the Council should not challenge the voice and vote of the People. That will continue to be my message," said President Russell Begaye.

On Nov. 12, President Begaye vetoed the legislation as it attempts to amend the President's line-item veto authority that is contrary to the 2009 initiative. The initiative passed by the People clearly states that amendments to the line-item veto authority can only be by the initiative process. In other words, only the Navajo People can change this authority. It is not an authority that can be limited or amended by the Navajo Nation Council.

The line-item veto was part of an initiative pursued in 2008, by former President Joe Shirley, Jr. to bring governmental fiscal responsibility back to the Navajo Nation. On December 15, 2009, the Navajo People voted "yes" to give line-item veto authority to the Navajo Nation President. On June 25, 2010, former President Shirley made history and exercised the President's first line-item veto.

Since that time, this authority has been exercised many times over by President Shirley, former President Ben Shelly and more recently by President Begaye.

### THE AMENDMENT:

The initiative passed by the Navajo People states "budget items" in the "Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget and supplemental appropriations" are subject to line-item veto. The Navajo Nation Council is attempting to amend the President's line-item veto from "budget items" to only the "numeric appropriated dollar amount".

"Any direct impact to the budget are "budget items" which include set asides, waivers, and conditions of appropriations. The Navajo people passed this initiative to stop wasteful spending and ensure government fiscal responsibility and efficiency. This amendment can easily be used to manipulate the budget by hiding appropriations in other parts of the budget where the President's line-item veto authority is attempting to be removed. This is contrary to the initiative passed by the Navajo people," said Vice-President Jonathan Nez.

"I understand the legislation was the result of long hours in developing title two amendments to address and clarify Legislative processes. However, to limit and amend the President's line-item veto authority was never part of those discussions but instead, it was introduced on the Council floor. I respectfully ask the Council to withdraw the override legislation and to re-introduce the legislation as this Administration supports those efforts," said President Begaye

If the Council wants clarification on the Navajo people's initiative, the question should be posed to them. We have not seen one chapter resolution nor any support to limit the President's line-item veto authority. In fact, we have received many messages from our People stating that this is for the People to decide not the Council nor the President.

"The Vice-President and I will continue to fight and protect the voice of the Navajo people. For it is the Navajo people who have elected and entrusted us to be their voice, to represent them and to advocate on their behalf," said President Begaye

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