

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - Former Navajo Nation president and Ariz. state legislator Albert Hale passed away on Feb. 2, at the age of 70, due to complications from COVID-19.

He is celebrated by many leaders and loved ones.

Hale was born in Ganado, Ariz. in 1950. He was Áshįįhi and born for Tódich'ii'nii. His maternal grandfather was Honágháahnii and his paternal grandfather was Kinyaa'áanii.

He served as the President of the Navajo Nation from 1995-1998. Hale was appointed to serve the remainder of the term of former Ariz. Gov. Janet Napolitano in 2004.

He served as a member of the Ariz. State Senate from 2004-2011.

He was elected to the Ariz. House of Representatives in 2011 and served there until 2017.

Prior to his elected positions, he served as asst. atty. gen. for the Navajo Nation and was special counsel to the Navajo Nation Council. He also served as a judge pro tempore in the Laguna Tribal Court system

The 24th Navajo Nation Council said Hale was known for his term as the chair of the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission at the time of the negotiation of the San Juan River Basin Water Rights Settlement Agreement which was ratified by Congress after it was signed in 2005.

At a young age, Hale experienced the atrocities of the boarding school era and graduated from Ft. Wingate High School in 1969.

He later earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Ariz. State Univ. and a Juris Doctor from the Univ. of N. M.

He was a member of the Navajo Nation Bar Association and the N.M. Bar Association, and served in many different capacities at various levels of government and also had his own private law practice.

“Throughout his service to the Navajo Nation, he helped our people in many ways by helping to secure water rights in the state of New Mexico, advocating for the remediation of uranium mine sites and mine workers, securing critical funding at the state level, and for his outspoken advocacy for people of all backgrounds and nationalities.

“We ask all of our Diné people to join us in honoring former President Hale and to offer prayers for his family,” Nez added.

On Feb. 2, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued a proclamation calling for all flags on the Navajo Nation to be flown at half-staff beginning Feb. 3 through Feb. 6 in honor and memory of former Navajo Nation President Albert Hale.

“To the family of Albert Hale, we offer our heartfelt condolences and prayers at this difficult time. We join our Navajo people in grieving for the loss of our great leader, a loving family man, and my brother. Throughout his lifetime, he demonstrated his love and compassion for our people through his service and all of his great contributions as President of the Navajo Nation and as a member of the Ariz. Senate and House of Representatives. He was known by many as ‘Ahbihay’ and always greeted everyone with a smile and shared his humor with all. He stood

strong on many issues and left the world a better place than he found it. First Lady Phefelia Nez and I pray that his family will take comfort in knowing that he is now with our Creator at this time," Nez said.

Lizer also expressed condolences.

"My family and I are very saddened by the loss of a great leader of our time, the Honorable Albert Hale. On every occasion, he greeted us with open arms and a warm smile. In his many years of service to the Navajo people and the citizens of Arizona, he was very instrumental in many issues and always stood up for underserved communities. We will always cherish our memories of him and hold him close to our hearts. We remember his family, friends, and colleagues in our prayers at this time," he said.

Sen. Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., issued a statement on Hale's passing.

"As Navajo Nation President, Albert Hale worked to provide a greater voice for Chapters in Tribal government. My prayers and deepest condolences are with President Hale's family members, loved ones, and the people of the Navajo Nation whom he served."

Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, D-N.M., released this statement about Hale:

"Former Navajo Nation President Albert Hale dedicated his life to serving the Navajo Nation. We will always remember his passion for public service and the Navajo community. His accomplishments and legacy will continue on. My deepest condolences and prayers go out to his family, his community, and all of the people that hold him in their hearts."

Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne talked about Hale's contributions to the Navajo Nation:

"The Navajo Nation Judicial Branch sends sincere condolences to the family and friends of Albert Hale. President Hale made significant contributions to and impacts on our Navajo Nation

government and legal system. His dedication and work reached beyond his own sphere to affect our Navajo people to this day. His extraordinary leadership in the legal field blazed trails for others to follow. As a statesman, Sen. Hale, and later, State Rep. Hale, represented constituents with honor and success to secure rights and justice and restored resources for the people through his leadership and determination. As a naat'áanii, he administered leadership skills and defended our Diné and our sovereignty through legal paths as an attorney, jurist, and president. It is with great respect and dignity that we honor the late President Albert Hale. May the family, friends, and our Navajo Nation find peace, comfort, and solace in his remembrance."

The family of Albert Hale issued the following statement, "The Hale Family appreciates the outpouring of prayers and condolences for our mighty leader Albert Hale. The Navajo Nation knew him as Ahbihay, but we knew him as a loving and supportive dad and husband. He deeply cared for our Diné Nation and people. His contributions were immense and we know that his work as a leader and lawyer impacted so many lives. We will carry on and honor his legacy as a leader and traditional man."

The memorial event will be held Feb. 5 at 11:00 a.m. MT. It will be live-streamed on the Nez-Lizer Facebook page and YouTube channel, and aired live on KTNN AM 660, FM 101.5 and KKNS AM 131.

The family of Albert Hale requests inquiries to be sent to his daughter April Hale, who is the family's spokesperson, by e-mail at ahale505@gmail.com or by phone at (505) 728-0760.