

Record-setting former Gallup mayoral candidate running for NN delegate seat

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Brent Detsoi wants to restore trust to District 14

He may be the youngest candidate running for the Navajo Nation Council Delegate seat in District 14, but Brent Detsoi believes "...we need to restore trust in our Navajo leaders and that needs to start now. We need young in there."

A former Gallup Police officer, Detsoi is from Twin Lakes, and is a former probation and parole officer with the Navajo Nation office in Shiprock. Detsoi, 27, is one of 13 people running for the post vacated by Mel Begay.

A special council delegate election is June 28.

"We need to advocate for increased funding and keep our governmental leaders accountable," Detsoi said in an interview with the Sun. "We need to fight for Federal Impact Aid for our educational system. And we need to assist John Pinto [New Mexico House of Representatives, D-Tohatchi] in the fight for the betterment of Johnson Road, Deer Springs Road, and Hot Springs Road – and any other dilapidated road within the five chapters."

Detsoi said working with the probation and parole office has taught him to "read and not

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interpret laws.” District 14 includes the communities of Tohatchi, Twin Lakes, Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, and Naschitti.

A new law instituted years ago took the Navajo Nation delegate number from 88 to the current 24. Council delegates earn \$25,000 annually in the job during their four-year terms.

A special election is June 28, and the person elected will serve out the remainder of Begay’s term, which is a year-and-a-half.

Others running for the District 14 seat are Theresa Becenti-Aguilar, Karen Bedonie, Edison Begay, Jr., Steven Begay, Bob Begaye, Elvis Bitsilly, Ansley Curley, Anthony Howard, Willis Nez, Nathan Notah, Harrison Plummer, and Tom Ranger.

A few months ago, the Navajo Nation Election Administration removed Mel Begay from office after a conviction by the Window Rock District Court on conspiracy and making or permitting false Navajo Nation vouchers charges in amounts that totaled more than \$33,000. Begay was subsequently sentenced to three years in prison for the crimes. He served 13 years as a delegate.

In 2011, Detsoi was one of three Navajos to run for mayor against Gallup Mayor Jackie McKinney. The other Navajos in that race were Ira Vandever and Mervyn Tilden. At that time, Gallup had never seen three Navajos run for mayor in the same election. Detsoi finished seventh in the Gallup mayoral race, out of a field of nine.

***By Bernie Dotson
Sun Correspondent***