

NN: 11 ballots needed at Tohatchi Chapter

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 15 July 2016 00:47



Official: Outcome not impacted

The canvassing related to the June 28 Navajo Nation Council Delegate seat for District 14 went well, except for a ballot snafu at the Tohatchi Chapter House voting poll, officials said.

Edison Wauneka, director of the Navajo Nation Election Administration, said 11 ballots were needed at the Tohatchi Chapter House because that location “just ran out — they ran short of ballots.”

Officials said the ballots ran out in the late afternoon.

“I’m disappointed. The fact of the matter is that it should never have happened,” Wauneka told the Sun this week. “The polling president could have called us prior to the closing of the polls and we could have taken care of this. If they had a sense that ballots were going to be short, then we could have gotten more ballots there without a problem and in a timely fashion.”

Wauneka said voters simply waited until the extra ballots arrived. He said no one was inconvenienced, as no one was upset or verbally or physically out of order.

District 14 candidate Brent Detsoi, who finished sixth in the voting, agreed the circumstance was something that never should have happened in the first place.

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“It should be looked into further,” Detsoi said shortly after the election. “You have to pre-plan for things like this — and that didn’t happen.”

Steven Begay of Naschitti won the race. He replaces Mel Begay who was forced to vacate the seat due to the fact that a Window Rock court found him guilty of conspiracy and making and permitting false Navajo Nation voucher charges, which totaled more than \$33,000. Mel Begay was subsequently sentenced to three years in prison for the crime.

District 14 includes Tohatchi, Coyote Canyon, Twin Lakes, Naschitti, and Mexican Springs. Elected delegates — there are 24 around the Navajo Nation — earn \$25,000 annually and serve four-year terms.

Thirteen candidates ran for the seat and Steven Begay won with a 731-vote count. Theresa-Becenti-Aguilar of Coyote Canyon came in second place with 564 votes and Nathan Notah of Tohatchi was third with 344 votes. Taking into account the Tohatchi ballot shortage, Wauneka said the final vote tallies ultimately do not change the election outcome.

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