

Nez-Lizer Administration calls for Navajo law amendment

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‘All powers originate from the Navajo people’

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are calling on the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors to move forward with a referendum measure in the upcoming Navajo Nation General Election by allowing Navajo voters to decide whether or not Navajo Nation law should be amended to state that “all powers originate from the Navajo people” and that the “Navajo people maintain the inherent power and authority to govern themselves.” If approved by voters, the ballot measure would codify and protect the Navajo peoples’ inherent right of governance over those in tribal government.

As a member of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council, Nez introduced legislation to refer the ballot measure to the Board of Election Supervisors, which was approved by the Navajo Nation Council on July 23, 2014. However, for unknown reasons, the measure has yet to be placed on the ballot for Navajo voters to decide.

“The current law states that the Navajo Nation Council is the ‘governing body of the Navajo Nation.’ If this ballot measure is approved by Navajo voters, that language would be replaced with language that honors the fact that the Navajo people maintain the inherent power and authority to govern themselves and powers not delegated are reserved to the Navajo people,” Nez said.

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“This important initiative aligns with the principles of our democracy, which value liberty, equality, and justice, but before the Navajo people can make this decision, the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors must authorize the measure to be placed on the General Election ballot,” Nez said. He further stated that the Navajo people are supreme in a democratic society and their participatory rights must be recognized and honored. “Let’s give the Navajo people the opportunity to make this critical decision about their government — it belongs to them.”

The measure would also amend Title II of the Navajo Nation Code to state, “The Navajo People hereby delegate the legislative authorities of the Navajo Nation to the Navajo Nation Council. All legislative powers not limited by laws of the Navajo Nation or by vote of the Navajo People are delegated to the Navajo Nation Council, including the power to act as the governing body of the Navajo Nation and for purposes of external government relations.”

“I don’t think anyone can argue that the power and authorities of our government are derived from the Navajo people. This ballot measure is very important to the foundation of our Navajo government and the Navajo people have a right to vote on it.” Lizer said. “The measure also honors the right to vote, which our people have fought long and hard to secure. The ballot measure is supported by the Navajo Nation Council through their resolution, but has yet to be placed on a ballot.

“Perhaps all of the issues and challenges in the 2014 presidential election overshadowed this initiative, but now is the opportunity to allow Navajo voters to decide,” Lizer said.

Nez and Lizer issued a letter to the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors outlining their support for the ballot measure and urging the board to place it on the upcoming General Election ballot for the Navajo Nation.