

## Jonathan Nez announces running mate

Written by Staff Reports  
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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation Presidential candidate Jonathan Nez was joined by his wife, Phefelia Nez and their children, at the Navajo Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock, Ariz. on Aug. 8 as he announced that Chad Abeyta, a Navajo veteran, attorney, husband, and father from New Mexico will be his running mate for the upcoming Navajo Nation general election.

The 33-year-old vice presidential candidate is originally from Alamo, N.M., located on the eastern side of the Navajo Nation. He is Tó Baazhní'ázhí and born for Chishí. His maternal grandfather is Kiis'áanii and his paternal grandfather is Áshhí. Abeyta was joined by his wife, Paulene Abeyta, their two children Hailey and Myles, and nephews Joseph and Michael for the announcement.

Abeyta served in the U.S. Air Force and traveled abroad three times in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Unified Protector. He earned a bachelor's degree and juris doctor degree from the University of New Mexico. He also earned a Master of Laws Degree from the University of Arizona's James E. Rogers College of Law.

Abeyta returned to the Navajo Nation immediately after graduation and began serving the Navajo Nation as an attorney with the Office of Legislative Counsel. His professional experience includes policy writing, legislative drafting, labor relations and employment law, providing legal advice to clients, litigation, and leadership on a non-profit board. Abeyta and his wife currently reside in To'hajiilee, N.M. with their children and two dogs.

"I am honored to be selected as a candidate for Vice President of the Navajo Nation. My wife and I are evidence of President Nez's commitment to bring our young Navajo people home to serve and become leaders. My family and I are here today to join President Nez, First Lady, and the team to continue that mission for the Navajo Nation and our people," Abeyta said.

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He went on to praise the work Nez has done so far as Navajo Nation President.

“President Jonathan Nez has demonstrated outstanding leadership, especially during this unprecedented time as he continually works and advocates for the best interest of the Navajo people. My family and I look forward to taking on the challenge of serving all Navajo people,” Abeyta said.

Abeyta’s wife is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who was raised in To’hajiilee, N.M. by her másání. Paulene holds dual bachelor’s degrees from the University of New Mexico and a juris doctor degree from the University of Arizona’s James E. Rogers College of Law.

She is an Emerge New Mexico Alumna and was influential in coordinating grassroots campaign efforts for former Congresswoman Deb Haaland. She is also the current Vice President of the To’hajiilee Community School Board of Education and serves as a board of director for the National Native American Bar Association.

She works in the Natural Resources Unit at the Navajo Nation Department of Justice where she provides legal direction regarding a wide range of environmental legal issues including statutory and regulatory authority, contracts and procurement issues, and intergovernmental agreements.

“Our family is excited for the opportunity to continue to serve the Navajo Nation at this next level. Our past experience and current expertise provide us with insight to the Nation’s toughest issues and a platform for creative solutions. I am confident that President Nez selected a significantly qualified vice-presidential candidate with a true heart for the people. He is a loving husband and father that is committed to serving our people,” Paulene said about her husband.

Presidential candidate and current President Nez said the Abeytas symbolize what many young Diné professionals strive for by pursuing and earning a formal education while upholding the teachings of their elders, and returning home to help and serve their people.

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“Chad and Paulene were raised by strong parents and grandparents and they now raise their own children with the same love and compassion that they were raised with. They worked hard to earn their law degrees and they immediately returned home to help our people the past few years. They are involved at the community level and they have professional experience with the Navajo Nation that will serve the Navajo people well,” Nez said.

Nez added he was excited to work with Chad and Pauline.

“My wife, Phefelia, and I are excited and looking forward to building on the success of the first term in office alongside Chad and Paulene. With his upbringing, faith, military service, education, professional experience, and family, Chad will serve our people with great honor and love,” Nez said.

“Their strong foundation based on family and faith will allow the Abeyta family to serve all Navajo people with dignity, integrity, and compassion. Working together, we will strive forward to help support our precious children, families, and everyone who needs a hand up. I congratulate the Abeyta family and I look forward to working with them for the people,” First Lady Phelia Nez said.

On Aug. 2, Nez received the most support of all candidates with over 17,000 votes, according to the unofficial results. Upon certification of the primary election results by the Navajo Nation Board of Election Supervisors, Nez and Abeyta will be on the ballot for the positions of President and Vice President in the November general election.

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