



Office of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission

P.O. Box 129
St. Michaels, AZ 86511
Phone: (928) 871-7436
Fax: (928) 871-7437

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 14, 2014**

Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission hears concerns from Navajo citizens about voting rights.

St. Michaels, Navajo Nation (AZ)-The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission has received numerous inquiries about human rights issues that affect the recent decision to disqualify Mr. Chris Deschene's candidacy for Navajo Nation President. The NNHRC has also received concerns about the disqualifications and concerns about the Navajo Nation Council resolution amending the qualifications for elected positions in the Navajo government for a single candidate.

The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission has reviewed the results from the primary election from August 2014, and the ongoing issues presented in Navajo court and hearing office and Navajo laws pertaining to Navajo elections.

The Navajo Nation Council has authorized the Navajo Board of Election supervisors and Navajo Election Administration to handle all issues that pertain to the Navajo election process and uphold the standards of the qualifications of each candidate who is running for an election position in the Navajo Nation government.

It is clear that the Navajo Nation government has procedures that regulate the voting rights of Navajo citizens on the Navajo Nation. These laws provide the standards for every elected position in the Navajo government. When a candidate applies for an elected position in the Navajo Nation government, the Navajo Nation Election Administration uses an honor system which places a significant amount of trust in the information being provided by the candidate whom is filing and is not authorized to seek information beyond the application.

The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission will not deny any Navajo Citizen to file a complaint with the NNHRC but does note that it is also critical to file with the Office of Hearing and Appeals in a timely matter. According to the Election Administration, 11 N.N.C. Section 341 (A) provides a filing a complaint within 10 days "of an incident complained of or the election" with the Office of Hearing and Appeals. The 10 days lapsed on November 14, 2014 from the November 4th general election.

The NNHRC has also received concerns that revolve around the conduct of Navajo Nation Chief Justice. Within the Navajo Nation there is a commission that can handle complaints regarding this matter. The Navajo Nation Judicial Conduct Commission has not been reinstated and with the approval of FY15 budget it has brought the NNJCC to

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be reestablished. According to 7 N.N.C. Section 421 the Navajo Nation Judicial Conduct Commission has “statutory authority to investigate or directs the investigation of complaints or grievances against Justices and Judges (of the Navajo Nation.)” The Law and Order Committee staffs are making efforts to solicit members for the commission.

The problems with the current Navajo Nation voting laws need to be amended to allow full compliance at the initial filing of candidate application and afforded respect thought out the process. Legislation needs to be introduced by a Council Delegate to address this issue and the Navajo Nation Council needs to create a bill that clear on the election process and make the adoption of the Navajo law that fits best with the Navajo citizens concerns.

For more information on this matter contact the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission at 928.871.7436.

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