



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Navajo Nation Leadership Celebrate Navajo Court System



Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon (L) signs the Justice Day Proclamation with Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne on April 1 in Window Rock.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation leadership celebrated the Navajo Nation Judicial System's 60 years of service to the Navajo people Monday, April 1.

Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne hosted the executive and legislative branches, which were represented by President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer, and Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), respectively.

"We may be celebrating 60 years, but we've always had it," said Chief Justice Jayne, referring to the Navajo traditional concepts of justice and peacemaking.

In 1959, the Navajo Nation Council replaced the Court of Indian Offenses with the Navajo Nation Courts that continue to operate to this day.

Through several reorganizations, the courts have developed into the most sophisticated and expansive tribal court system in the United States.

“If it weren’t for our current and past chief justices, we wouldn’t have the best judicial branch and system in the whole world,” stated Speaker Damon. “[Chief Justice Jayne] is laying the groundwork for the next 60 years. Thank you for coming back.”

Speaker Damon also highlighted how the Nation’s courts are well-regarded by external institutions.

When Speaker Damon was chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, he routinely explained the impartiality of the Nation’s courts when the committee and council fought back against demands for waivers of sovereign immunity.

“Not many people know how important our courts are to not only our justice system, but our ability to exercise our sovereignty,” Speaker Damon stated.

The Navajo Nation Judicial Branch will host several “Justice Days” throughout the month of April. More information is available at navajocourts.org.

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