



25th Navajo Nation Council

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Law and Order Committee recommends permanent appointment for probationary judges**



**Left to right: Judge Latitia Stover, Vice-Chair Cheryl Yazzie, Delegate Nathan Notah, Delegate Steven Arviso, Speaker Crystalayne Curley, Chair Eugenia Charles Newton, and Delegate Herman Daniels commend Stover's commitment to serving the Navajo people through difficult times.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – In a significant step toward enhancing the Navajo Nation's judicial system, the Navajo Nation Law and Order Committee (LOC) has unanimously recommended the permanent appointments of Judges Victor Clyde, Malcolm Laughing, and Letitia Stover. These judges, each having successfully completed their probationary terms, are now awaiting final approval from Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren to become permanent members of the Navajo judiciary.

The recommendation follows a thorough review of each judge's performance during their probationary period, during which they demonstrated an unwavering commitment to justice and the values of the Navajo Nation. This decision marks an important moment in reinforcing the strength and integrity of the Navajo Nation's judicial system.

"Alcohol and drugs are playing a big role in the hardships our people are facing. I've seen it firsthand in my own family," said Delegate Steven Arviso. "As judges, you have the power to make decisions that could help someone turn their life around. I want you to think about the people coming before you—their challenges, their pain—and to offer them that tough love when they need it. I'm voting Green because I believe in your ability to serve our people."

Judge Victor Clyde brings a wealth of experience and a deep connection to Navajo traditions to his role in the judiciary. Prior to serving as a judge, Clyde held various positions in law enforcement and the legal field, including roles as a Justice of the Peace for Apache County's Chinle precinct, a criminal investigator, a police officer, and a prosecutor for the Navajo Nation. His deep respect for Diné traditions has guided his approach to justice, as he has worked with traditional practitioners to integrate cultural knowledge into his judicial philosophy.

Delegate Nathan Notah, echoed the sentiments, emphasizing the need for Judge Clyde's continued service. "I was impressed with the evaluation we did. Judge Clyde is committed to addressing the backlog of cases, which is vital for our people who rely on the courts," said Notah. The committee also acknowledged the need for the judicial branch's support in addressing societal challenges, particularly issues related to alcohol and drug-related crimes.

"Judge Laughing has shown an unwavering commitment to the Navajo people, consistently presiding over cases with fairness and professionalism," said Vice Chair Cherilyn Yazzie of the Law and Order Committee. "His experience and dedication to addressing the challenges faced by our community, especially in terms of alcohol and drug-related cases, make him an asset to our judiciary."

Judge Malcolm Laughing, a resident of Crystal, New Mexico, has served the Navajo Nation judiciary with dedication and diligence. With over 17 years of legal experience, Laughing's career has spanned various roles, including positions with the Navajo Housing Authority, the Navajo Nation Public Defender's Office, and private legal practice.

Throughout his tenure as a probationary judge, Laughing has earned widespread respect for his ability to handle complex cases with fairness and professionalism. His work in addressing societal issues, particularly substance abuse cases, has had a profound impact on the Navajo Nation courts.

"Judge Stover leads by example, and her actions during the pandemic showed true leadership," Delegate Herman Daniel's added. "Her dedication to serving the Navajo people, even in the most challenging of times, is a testament to her commitment to justice."

Judge Letitia Stover, from Naatsis'áán (Navajo Mountain), has proven herself a dedicated and compassionate leader during her time as a probationary judge. Stover's distinguished academic background includes a Juris Doctor from the University of South Dakota School of Law and a Master of Laws (LLM) from the University of Arizona. Before pursuing a legal career, Stover worked as a teacher, an experience that has influenced her patient and educational approach to the bench.

During her tenure, Stover has addressed significant backlogs in cases and worked tirelessly to ensure the timely administration of justice.

"Throughout the pandemic, Stover continued her judicial duties under difficult circumstances, ensuring that court operations remained uninterrupted," said Chair Eugenia Charles Newton. "Her commitment to transparency and ensuring that individuals understand the rulings she delivers has solidified her position as a trusted and fair judge within the Navajo judiciary."

The Law and Order Committee's unanimous recommendation for the permanent appointments of Judges Clyde, Laughing, and Stover now await the approval of the Navajo Nation President Nygren, who will review and approve the nominations. Following the President's approval, the appointed judges will meet with the Navajo Nation Council for final confirmation.

Once confirmed, the judges will continue their work in upholding justice within the Navajo Nation, playing vital roles in ensuring fairness, integrity, and the balance of tradition with modern law.

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