



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

MEDIA CONTACTS

Alray Nelson, Communications Director
Kyron Hardy, Public Information Officer
E-mail: nnlb.communications@gmail.com
Phone: (928) 565-0440

Navajo Nation applauds the historic confirmation of Ketanji Brown Jackson to the United States Supreme Court

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KAYENTA, Ariz. — The 24th Navajo Nation Council applauds the historic confirmation of Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first African American female justice to the Supreme Court by the United States Senate. Madam Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton and Council Delegate Vince James of the Law and Order Committee (LOC) were in Washington, D.C., this week to witness the historic proceedings.

Overcoming a concerted effort by most Republicans to derail her nomination, Judge Jackson was confirmed by a 53-47 vote, with all 50 Democrats voting in favor. The lone three Republicans included Senator Mitt Romney (Utah), Senator Susan Collins (Maine), and Senator Lisa Murkowski (Alaska).

“Equal Justice Under Law is a reality and not just an ideal anymore - the first African American woman was just confirmed by a bipartisan vote of the U.S. Senate. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is part of the greater American story that embraces our diversity and where we are all equal under the law. That history also must acknowledge that one day - in the near future - the first Native American is part of the Supreme Court. Trailblazers like Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and Transportation Assistant Secretary Arlando Teller are paving the way for the next seven generations. The Navajo Nation now urges Congress to confirm Ms. Roselyn Tso as our next director of the Indian Health Service,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

Several tribal nations and tribal organizations, including the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), have expressed support for Judge Jackson to the Senate Judiciary Committee. This included 56 western Alaskan communities and members of the Navajo Nation Council who hosted meetings with Congressional representatives since January.

“Just as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg was a fighter for women across America, Judge Jackson makes history today during an important time for the United States. Her confirmation is historic



PHOTO: Law and Order Committee members Madam Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton and Council Delegate Vince James applaud the historic confirmation of Ketanji Brown Jackson to the United States Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.

because it sends a message across Indian Country and communities of color that our young women can serve on the highest court of the land. Now is the time we embrace the leadership of our Navajo women and ensure they are elected or appointed into judicial positions,” said Madam Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock).

During the Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings last month, Judge Jackson was given the opportunity to tell Congress what it would mean to her to serve on the nation’s highest court. It was noted that the federal government owes an obligation to tribal nations that is of a unique fiduciary nature.

“Our Navajo people are delighted by the confirmation of Judge Jackson and applaud President Joe Biden for his historic nomination of the first African American woman to the highest court. She is well qualified and is the first ever justice to have worked as a public defender. Judge Jackson is seen as a champion for our marginalized communities and an advocate of the sovereign rights of tribes under the Constitution. Indian Country trusts her judicial experience to advocate and protect our sovereignty,” said Council Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kinłichii, Steamboat).

As part of her Congressional testimony, Judge Jackson further added, “Indian tribes are, as a general matter, considered to be sovereigns and the relationship is a sovereign-to-sovereign relationship, but it’s one in which the federal government has some responsibilities related to the Indian nation. There is a trust responsibility that the federal government has in terms of making sure that the tribes are recognized and cared for, in the context of our system.”

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson will replace Justice Stephen G. Breyer when he retires at the end of the court’s session this summer.

As part of their ongoing advocacy for more Native American federal judges, the Navajo Nation Council continues to meet with Senators across the country to advocate for the immediate confirmation of Sunshine Suzanne Sykes to be a federal judge in the United States District Court for the Central District of California. A member of the Navajo Nation, she was nominated by President Joe Biden in December.

Statements from Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah Senators for Judge Jackson:

- “Through Judge Jackson’s historic confirmation hearings, she carried herself with poise, dignity, and resolve. I am confident that Judge Jackson will serve as an independent and fair voice on the Supreme Court to tackle the most pressing issues facing our nation. As the first Black woman on the Supreme Court, I know that she will continue to serve as an inspiration to countless Americans,” said Senator Ben Ray Lujan (New Mexico)
- “Judge Jackson received bipartisan support in the Senate because she is extremely well qualified and will bring a wealth of experience to the Court after serving as a judge on the federal bench and practicing law in the criminal justice system. Today is a proud day for our country. When Judge Jackson takes the bench as our next Supreme Court Justice, she will bring a whole generation of women and young girls with her.” - Senator Martin Heinrich (New Mexico)

- “Judge Jackson brings to the bench a wealth of knowledge, more trial court experience than all other current Supreme Court Justices combined, a commitment to respect, precedent, and a proven independent, pragmatic approach to judicial decisions. Jackson has exceptional qualifications and will serve our country well in the years to come.” - Senator Kyrsten Sinema (Arizona)
- “It’s a historic moment for our country. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is very well-qualified and has demonstrated a commitment to fairly interpreting and upholding the Constitution. Now we look forward to her service as a Supreme Court Justice.” - Senator Mark Kelly (Arizona)
- “While I do not expect to agree with every decision she may make on the Court, I believe that Judge Jackson more than meets the standard of excellence and integrity. I congratulate Judge Jackson on her expected confirmation and look forward to her continued service to our nation.” - Senator Mitt Romney (Utah)

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