

RESOLUTION OF THE
NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
24th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL -- First Year, 2019

AN EMERGENCY ACTION RELATING TO THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL;
RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR OF NEW MEXICO, MICHELLE LUJAN
GRISHAM, TO SELECT A NAVAJO NATION MEMBER TO REPLACE THE LATE
SENATOR DOCTOR JOHN PINTO TO FILL THE UNEXPIRED TERM

WHEREAS:

- A. The Navajo Nation Council is established as the governing body of the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. § 102(A).
- B. The Navajo Nation has a government-to-government relationship with the State of New Mexico.
- C. This legislation is offered as an emergency legislation to timely address the need for the Governor of New Mexico to appoint a replacement for the late Senator Doctor Pinto to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.
- D. Senator Doctor John Pinto, representative to the 3rd District of New Mexico, passed away on May 24, 2019. See Press Release attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.
- E. Senator Doctor John Pinto was elected to Senate in 1977, and held this position until his death on May 24, 2019, making him New Mexico's longest serving member of Senate. See Exhibit A.
- F. Senator Doctor John Pinto was born in Lupton, Arizona on Navajo Nation and was Dibé Łizhiní (Black Sheep Clan), born for Táchii'nii (Red Running Into the Water People Clan) his maternal grandfather was Tł'izilání (Many Goats Clan) and his paternal grandfather was Naaneesht'ézhí Táchii'nii (Charcoal-Streaked Division of the Red Running into the Water Clan) from the Standing Rock, Navajo Nation area. See Press Release attached hereto as **Exhibit B**.

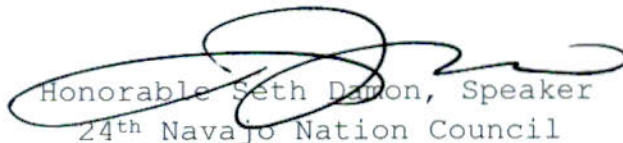
- G. Senator Doctor John Pinto enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1941 and served as a Navajo Code Talker during World War II. See Press Release attached hereto as **Exhibit C**.
- H. Senator Doctor John Pinto served as a member of the Indian and Cultural Affairs Committee and Senate and Education Committee. See Press Release attached hereto as **Exhibit D**.

THEREFORE, IT BE RESOLVED:

- A. The Navajo Nation hereby respectfully requests that Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham select a member of the Navajo Nation to replace the late Senator Doctor Pinto in order to continue Senator Doctor Pinto's legacy of strong advocacy and dedicated work to enhance the lives of the Diné of the Great Navajo Nation.
- B. The Navajo Nation hereby authorizes the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council, President of the Navajo Nation, and their designees, to advocate for the appointment of a member of the Navajo Nation to be the replacement for the unexpired term of the late Senator Doctor Pinto.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the 24th Navajo Nation Council at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona), at which a quorum was present and that the same was passed by a vote of 21 in Favor, and 00 Opposed, on this 5th day of June 2019.


Honorable Seth Damon, Speaker
24th Navajo Nation Council

6.6.19

DATE

Motion: Honorable Paul Begay
Second: Honorable Amber Kanazbah Crotty

Speaker Seth Damon not voting

JOHN PINTO

May 24, 2019

NM mourns long-time state senator, John Pinto

By Andy Lyman



A screenshot of video showing Sen. John Pinto, D-Gallup, singing The Potato Song.



Long-time New Mexico state senator and Navajo Code Talker John Pinto died Friday morning. He was 94.

The longest serving member of the Senate, Pinto represented District 3, which includes a large section of western New Mexico. He served in the U.S. Marines as a Navajo Code Talker and went on to work as a teacher. Pinto was first elected in 1977 and hitchhiked from Gallup to Santa Fe for his first day in the Senate. As the story goes, he was picked up along the way by a driver who turned out to be then-Sen. Manny Aragon, also reporting for his first day in the Senate.

Pinto's legislative colleagues shared their thoughts about him Friday afternoon.

"This is an extraordinary loss to Senator Pinto's family, the state of New Mexico, the country and anyone who knew and loved him," Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth said in a statement. "It was an incredible honor to serve with Senator Pinto."

U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland also paid her respects to Pinto and offered her "deep condolences to his family and to the Navajo Nation."

"Over the course of many years I have been fortunate to have spent time with Senator John Pinto," Haaland wrote in a statement. "From organizing in Indian Country to a visit to the Round House as a congresswoman, it was always clear Senator Pinto was a fierce advocate for the best interests of New Mexico."

A highlight of each session for many lawmakers was watching Pinto perform the "[Potato Song](https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2016/02/16/john-pinto-sings-the-potato-song-nmleg/)," on the floor of the Senate.

A press release from the Senate Democrats said services for Pinto are pending.

Share this:

TRENDING: nothing about it with a good time. But, it's a good time.



Search



NAVAJO TIMES

DINÉ BI NAALTSOOS

Monday, June 3, 2019



Life

Business

News ▾

Events

Obits

Opinion ▾

Sports

Classifieds

Advertise

Subscribe | Login ▾

**FREE** 4 LTE
with activation**FREE4Life**
The Nation's LTE Network
CELLULARONE

Family of Pinto: Thank you for giving him water, food

By Donovan Quintero | May 31, 2019 | News | ★★★★★



Navajo Times | Donovan Quintero

Staff Sgt. David Villanueva, with the Marine Corps' 4th Recon, Delta Company, 4th Battalion from Albuquerque, plays "taps" at State Sen. John Pinto's funeral at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Gallup on Thursday.

GALLUP

John Pinto, 94, the New Mexico state senator who served the people for 42 years and who trained as a

ADVERTISEMENT

NAVAJO ARTS & CRAFTS
101 N. 1st St. • Gallup, NM 87301
(505) 863-1111 • www.navajopoint.com

You are cordially invited to...
TUBA CITY STORE
GRAND OPENING
JUNE 8, 2019
9 A.M. - 7 P.M.

FREE food and drinks, raffles, door prizes, and FREE parking. See you there!

WEATHER & ROADS**Wind
ow
Rock
Weather****Fair**78.0
F
(25.

Marine during World War II, was laid to rest on Thursday at a private burial ceremony in Tohatchi.

Before the burial, funeral services were held at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Gallup where hundreds of people honored Pinto, who was trained as a code talker.

The church quickly filled to capacity. The church’s family center was opened to accommodate family and friends who weren’t able to get into the church.

During the funeral mass, Pinto’s granddaughter, Kellie Lynn Arviso, said she remembered him as being a good grandfather who taught them to never give up.

Evelyn Pinto provided an oration in Navajo and said Pinto was a man who believed in happiness and was always on the road advocating for the people of New Mexico.

“He did this frequently and was often on the road late into the night. He never gave up. That was him,” Evelyn said in her eulogy speech.

For his public service, she said Pinto was recognized by Navajo Technical University with an honorary doctorate on May 17 in Crownpoint.

Pinto was born on Dec. 15, 1924, in Lupton, Arizona. He was Dibélishíní, born for Táchii’nii, and was the oldest of seven.

He got a late start in school, beginning at the age of 12. He graduated from high school in Torrance, California.

6 C)
De
wpo
int:
19.9
F
(-6.7
C)
Hu
mid
ity:
11%
Win
d:
from
the
Sout
hwe
st at
9.2
gusti
ng
to
23.0
MP
H (8
gusti
ng
to
20
KT)
Pre
ssu
re:
30.1
0
Mo
re
wea
ther
»

Regio
nal
Road
Condi
tions
Webc
ams
High
way
264,
Windo
w Rock

He enlisted in the Marine Corps and trained a code talker, but the war ended before he deployed. He was 21 at the time he was honorably discharged from the Marines.

Pinto worked for the Division of Social Welfare where he met the love of his life, Joann Dennison Pinto, whom he was married to for 65 years before her passing in 2017. They had four children: Flora, Cecil, Galen and Karen.

In 1952, Pinto returned to school and received a bachelor's degree in elementary education. He later earned a master's.

In 1971, he was elected as McKinley County commissioner. Six years later, in 1977, at age 52, he was elected to his first term as a New Mexico state senator.



Navajo Times | Donovan Quintero

State Sen. John Pinto's grandchildren, Naval Chief Petty Officers Crystal J. Pinto-Hunt, left, and Ceelyn John Pinto stand for their grandfather one last time on Thursday in Gallup.

Evelyn said he always believed in being happy and loved people of all colors.

She said he never wavered from his philosophies during his life as a public servant. He went from

**I-40,
WB @
Winslo
w**

**I-40,
WB @
Butler**

**SR-77
SB @
Holbro
ok**

ADVERTISEMENT

Our email editor
is so easy it's
preferred by 72%
of first time users.

Powerful Stuff

Constant C

Try

home to home whenever a bill he was sponsoring was going through the Senate.

Despite living a very public life, she said Pinto also kept his family life private.

“He kept his work and family life separate,” she said. “When he was home, he was a father, a grandfather, and a nali at home. His family was his life.”

He lived his life that way, always trying his best to ensure everyone had water to drink and food to eat.

“You probably gave him water to drink, some coffee to drink and food and bread to eat while he was visiting with you at your homes,” Evelyn said, becoming emotional. “Thank you for your kindness and taking care of him for us in that way.”

After the funeral service, the Marine Corps Honor Guard from Fourth Recon, Delta Company, 4th Battalion, out of Albuquerque honored Pinto with a three-gun volley.

The flag that was draped over his casket was folded and given to his daughter, Karen Arviso.

President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer both attended his service.

Lizer remembered seeing him eating at Sizzler’s four days before his passing.

“My wife and I, we were dining with our family, it was my birthday,” he said. “We’re sitting and eating and, low and behold, there’s Senator Pinto, right in front of me, eating and drinking his milk. I

FROM THE WIRES

Historian McCullough visits Ohio to discuss 'Pioneers' book

Chuck Hoskin Jr. elected Cherokee Nation's principal chief

D-Day's 24 hours changed 20th century, and Europe, forever

Cell tower project underway on Wisconsin tribe's reservation

Cherokee Nation leadership election begins

South Dakota reservation declares emergency after flooding

Kodiak Island village has graduating class of one student

Tlingit artist studies how to

went over and said, 'Hi,' and I introduced myself and he smiled. And it was so cool."

Nez said he first met Pinto at the Navajo Nation's Department of Transportation working on road projects.

"That's when our friendship began," he said. "I began leadership at the Council and stayed in touch with the senator. He was always looking out for the Navajo people, not just New Mexico, but all of the Navajo people, which I always appreciated.

"Every time we get a picture, he wouldn't say, 'Say cheese,' he would say, 'Say ach'ii.'"

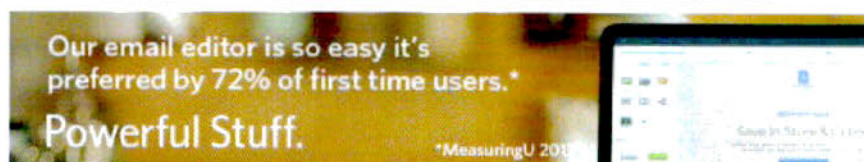
Pinto was the longest serving New Mexico state senator.

📖 To read the full article, pick up your copy of the Navajo Times at your nearest newsstand Thursday mornings!

Are you a digital subscriber? [Read the most recent three weeks of stories by logging in to your online account.](#)

🔍 [Find newsstand locations at this link.](#)

✅ Or, [subscribe via mail or online here.](#)



**weave
increasingly
rare tunics**

**North Dakota
tribe defends its
rights to
minerals from
state**

**Cherokee
Nation
leadership
election set for
Saturday**

**Trump
expresses
condolences
after Navajo
Code Talker's
death**

**Cherokee
Nation
leadership
election set for
Saturday**

**Iowa Supreme
Court affirms
Dakota Access
pipeline project**

**Top Democrat
hoping to craft
gambling deal
with tribes**

Martha's

**Efforts for
Bridgeport
casino stepped
up**

SHARE
THIS —[U.S. NEWS](#)

John Pinto, WWII Navajo Code Talker and longtime New Mexico lawmaker, dies at 94

"He dedicated his life to helping others," Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez said of John Pinto.

Sen. John Pinto enters the House chambers on the first day of the New Mexico Legislature at the New Mexico Capitol in Santa Fe, N.M., on Jan. 16, 2018. Juan Labreche / AP file

May 24, 2019, 7:30 PM MDT

By Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. — John Pinto, a Navajo Code Talker in World War II who became one of the nation's longest serving Native American elected officials as a New Mexico state senator, has died. He was 94.

Senate colleague Michael Padilla confirmed Pinto's death in Gallup on Friday after years of suffering from various illnesses that rarely kept him from his duties.

After serving as a Marine, Pinto was elected to the Senate in 1976 and represented a district that includes the Navajo Nation for more than four decades. The region is one of the poorest in the country.

"Words cannot express the sadness we feel for the loss of a great Diné warrior," said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, using the indigenous word for Navajo. "He dedicated his life to helping others."

Born in Lupton, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation to a family of sheep herders. Pinto didn't start formal schooling until he was nearly a teenager.

"At the age of 12, I was in kindergarten," Pinto told the Albuquerque Journal in a 2007 interview. "I guess I did all right."

Pinto also recalled that his grandparents told of being forced at gunpoint from their land in the 1860s by the U.S. Army in the forced relocation of the Navajo people on foot to southern New Mexico.

SHARE
THIS

Mayor Tim Keller
@MayorKeller

Today our state lost a legend, & I lost an old friend. Senator John Pinto and I became very close during the time we served together in the Senate. At 29, I was the youngest senator, & at 83, he was the oldest. We often ate together and worked together over the next six years.

223 1:48 PM - May 24, 2019 · Albuquerque, NM

[27 people are talking about this](#)

After serving as a Code Talker – a group of radio men who translated American coordinates and messages into an indecipherable code based on the Navajo language – Pinto had to take an English test four times before he was finally admitted into the University of New Mexico's College of Education.

He graduated with a bachelor's in elementary education at 39, and eventually earned his master's, becoming a teacher and a truancy officer in Gallup.

Pinto delved into politics to address the needs of impoverished indigenous populations. The Democrat won a seat in state Senate in 1976 as one of the state's first Native American senators.

An unassuming appearance and manner belied Pinto's political determination that carried him through 42 years in the Legislature. Laurie Canepa, the senior librarian for the Legislative Council Service, said that made him the longest serving senator in state history.

SHARE
THIS

State Sen. Manny Aragon, D-Albuquerque, wraps the state flag around Sen. John Pinto, D-San Juan, McKinley, as Gov. Gary Johnson, from right, looks on during a ceremony at the state capitol building in Santa Fe, N.M., on Sept. 12, 2001, to honor Pinto for his service during World War II as a Navajo Code Talker. Sarah Martone / AP file

Manny Aragon, the state's one-time Senate president, tells the story of driving to the Statehouse in a January 1977 snowstorm and picking up a middle-aged Navajo man who was hitchhiking in Albuquerque. The hitchhiker was newly elected Sen. Pinto.

"I just thought he was a transient," Aragon said.

In the Legislature, Pinto advocated for education reform and anti-poverty programs. Receiving a lifetime achievement award in 2016, Pinto recalled going hungry at times as a child while his parents juggled odd jobs and said the experience influenced his work on issues of homelessness as a lawmaker.

Every year, Pinto would sing on the Senate floor the "Potato Song" – a Navajo song about a potato, planted in the spring and visited in the summer until it is harvested. Fellow senators, staff and aides clapped along to Pinto's rendition.

Lenore Naranjo, the Senate's chief clerk, says Pinto taught her bits of Navajo language over the decades.

"A beautiful man is all I can say," Naranjo said.

Navajo Code Talker, longtime New Mexico Sen. John Pinto dies at 94

By **Amir Vera**, CNN

⌚ Updated 9:43 PM ET, Fri May 24, 2019

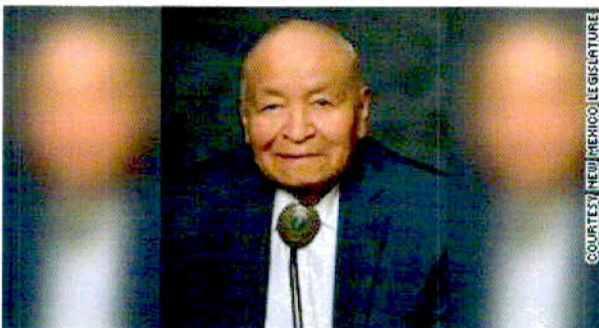
US +

Live TV



Who were the Navajo code talkers? 01:05

(CNN) — New Mexico Sen. John D. Pinto, a former World War II Navajo Code Talker, died Friday morning, according to a statement from his family.



Sen. John D. Pinto

Pinto was 94 and was the longest-serving senator in New Mexico, where he had been serving since 1977, according to [New Mexico's Senate website](#).

"He dedicated his life to public service. He worked tirelessly throughout his lifetime to serve the Diné people," the Pinto family's statement read. Diné is a Navajo term meaning people.

"The family would like to express their gratitude to his constituents and fellow legislators for allowing him to serve, it is what truly made him happy."

Pinto was a member of the Indian and Cultural Affairs Committee and the Senate Education Committee, according to the Senate's website. A look through the bills he sponsored shows Pinto sponsoring legislation to benefit the Navajo

people. [One of the bills](#) he sponsored in both 2018 and 2019 looked at allocating \$1 million to a Navajo Code Talkers Museum and Veterans Center.



US +

Live TV



Related Article: The incredible story of the Navajo Code Talkers that got lost in all the politics

Pinto served as a Navajo Code Talker in the US Marines before becoming a teacher, according to [CNN affiliate KRQE-TV](#). Code Talkers were Marines who spoke Navajo, a native American language they used to create a spoken code that Japanese code breakers were never able to decipher. It was

The code was a key factor in the American military victories at Iwo Jima, Saipan, and several other major battles in the Pacific theater.

More than 400 Navajo had learned the code by the end of the war. None of the original 29 code talkers who invented the language are still alive. Chester Nez, the last surviving member of the original 29, [died in 2014](#).

The program wasn't declassified by the military until 1968, and it would take several more decades before the story received wider recognition. In 2001, President George W. Bush presented the 29 original Navajo Code Talkers with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Navajo Nation and politicians react to Pinto's death

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez said "words cannot express the sadness we feel for the loss of a great Diné warrior."

"He dedicated his life to helping others and he changed the lives of so many people for the better," Nez said. "We will miss his smile, his humor, and his love and compassion for the Navajo people."

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham ordered all state flags to fly at half-staff effective immediately, according to a joint news release from the senator's family, the governor's office and the Navajo Nation.

"John Pinto's towering legacy stretches far beyond the borders of New Mexico, and his loss will be felt across not only this nation but the world," Grisham said. "He was a New Mexico icon and an American hero."



Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham @GovMLG · May 24, 2019

Replying to @GovMLG

Through relationships he built & respect he earned, he was able to secure innumerable crucial investments for New Mexicans, in particular Native communities. His record of service is unblemished, & his unwavering commitment to his people will forever serve as a

US +

Live TV



@GovMLG

Senator John Pinto was a New Mexico icon and an American hero. I will miss his good humor, as will everyone at the Capitol, and I offer my deepest condolences to his loved ones, his family and friends. pic.twitter.com/oAectRmWQi

96 1:45 PM - May 24, 2019



25 people are talking about this

Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller said when he and Pinto served as senators together, Pinto was the oldest at 83 and he was the youngest at 29.

"Today our state lost a legend, & I lost an old friend. Senator John Pinto and I became very close during the time we served together in the Senate. At 29, I was the youngest senator, & at 83, he was the oldest. We often ate together and worked together over the next six years," Keller said on Twitter.



US +

Live TV



Mayor Tim Keller
@MayorKeller

Today our state lost a legend, & I lost an old friend. Senator John Pinto and I became very close during the time we served together in the Senate. At 29, I was the youngest senator, & at 83, he was the oldest. We often ate together and worked together over the next six years.

223 1:48 PM - May 24, 2019 · Albuquerque, NM

[27 people are talking about this](#)

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon said Pinto's contributions to the Navajo people and New Mexico citizens are "too numerous to list."

"The impact he made in the soul of the Navajo People and New Mexico citizens as a leader will continue for generations," Damon said.

CNN's Chris Boyette and Jessica Jordan contributed to this report.

NAVAJO NATION

117

NNC 2019 Session

6/5/2019
04:25:53 PM

Amd# to Amd#	Legislation 0142-19:	PASSED
MOT Begay, P	Respectfully Requesting the	
SEC Crotty	Governor of New Mexico, Michelle	
	Lujan Grisham to Select a Navajo	

Yea : 21

Nay : 0

Excused : 1

Not Voting : 1

Yea : 21

Begay, E	Crotty	James, V	Tso, D
Begay, K	Daniels	Nez, R	Tso, E
Begay, P	Freeland, M	Smith	Walker, T
BeGaye, N	Halona, P	Stewart, W	Wauneka, E
Brown	Henio, J	Tso	Yellowhair
Charles-Newton			

Nay : 0

Excused : 1

Tso, C

Not Voting : 1

Yazzie

Presiding Speaker: Damon