

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY SHEET

Tracking No. 0365-19

DATE: November 26, 2019

TITLE OF RESOLUTION: AN ACTION RELATING TO THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; CONFIRMING THE PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENT OF MALCOLM LAUGHING AS NAVAJO NATION DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

PURPOSE: This bill will confirm the appointment of District Court Judge Malcolm Laughing for a two year probationary period. The President of the Navajo Nation shall appoint the District Court Judges with confirmation by the Navajo Nation Council from among those applicants recommended by the Law and Order [Judiciary] Committee of the Navajo Nation Council. The Law and Order Committee delegated its responsibility and authority to the Judicial Conduct Commission to screen applicants and to recommend the probationary appointment of judges and justices. LOCS-19-18. The Navajo Nation Council shall confirm judicial appointments. 7 N.N.C. § 355 (A).

This written summary does not address recommended amendments as may be provided by the standing committees. The Office of Legislative Counsel requests each Council Delegate to review each proposed resolution in detail.

5-DAY BILL HOLD PERIOD: high
Website Posting Time/Date: 2:02pm 11-27-19
Posting End Date: 12-02-19
Eligible for Action: 12-03-19

Naabik'iyáti' Committee
Thence
Navajo Nation Council

PROPOSED NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL RESOLUTION

24th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL -- First Year, 2019


(Prime Sponsor) TSO



TRACKING NO. 0365-19

AN ACTION

RELATING TO THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; CONFIRMING THE
PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENT OF MALCOLM LAUGHING AS NAVAJO
NATION DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

BE IT ENACTED:

Section One. Authority

- A. The Navajo Nation established the Law and Order Committee as a Navajo Nation standing committee and as such gave the Law and Order Committee authority to recommend to the Navajo Nation President the permanent appointment of probationary judges. 2 N.N.C. §§ 164 (A)(9), 600 (A), 601 (B)(10).
- B. The Law and Order Committee delegated its responsibility and authority to the Judicial Conduct Commission to screen applicants and to recommend the probationary appointment of judges and justices. LOCS-19-18.
- C. The Judicial Conduct Commission made its recommendation to the Navajo Nation President for Malcolm Laughing to be appointed as a probationary judge of the Navajo Nation. JCC-01-19.
- D. The President of the Navajo Nation shall appoint the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and District Court Judges with confirmation by the Navajo Nation Council from among those applicants recommended by the Law and Order [Judiciary] Committee of the

1 Navajo Nation Council. The Navajo Nation Council shall confirm judicial appointments.
2 7 N.N.C. § 355 (A).

- 3 E. References in the Navajo Nation Code and other official documents to the Government
4 Services and Intergovernmental Relations Committee shall mean Naabik'íyáti
5 Committee, unless the amendments enacted herein for the context of previous law
6 indicates otherwise. *See* CO-45-12.

7
8 **Section Two. Findings**

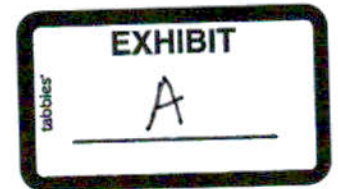
- 9 A. Malcolm Laughing is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and is an applicant for
10 appointment as District Court judge. Mr. Laughing's application and qualifications have
11 been reviewed by Judicial Conduct Commission, and he has been interviewed by Judicial
12 Conduct Commission. *See* JCC-01-19, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.
- 13 B. The Judicial Conduct Commission has determined that Malcolm Laughing meets the
14 qualifications for appointment as Navajo Nation Judge and has recommended him for
15 probationary appointment to the Navajo Nation President. *Id.*
- 16 C. The Navajo Nation President has appointed Malcolm Laughing as Navajo Nation judge,
17 subject to confirmation by the Navajo Nation Council. *See* Appointment Letter and
18 Qualification Documents attached hereto as **Exhibits B** and **C**, respectively.

19
20 **Section Three. Confirming Probationary Appointment**

21 The Navajo Nation confirms Mr. Malcolm Laughing as a probationary Navajo Nation
22 Judge.

23
24 **Section Four. Navajo Nation Privacy Act**

25 Confidential information within application documents shall remain protected except
26 upon its authorized disclosure by the appointee. 2 N.N.C. § 81 *et seq.* (2009).



JCC-01-19

**RESOLUTION OF THE
JUDICIAL CONDUCT COMMISSION**

**RECOMMENDING TO THE NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT THE PROBATIONARY
APPOINTMENT OF MALCOLM LAUGHING AS NAVAJO NATION DISTRICT
COURT JUDGE**

BE IT ENACTED:

SECTION ONE. AUTHORITY.

- A. Navajo Nation District Court Judges are selected by appointment and confirmation. See generally, 7 N.N.C. §355. The Law and Order Committee of the Navajo Nation Council initially determines the qualifications of all applicants for judgeships. 2 N.N.C. §601(B)(7) and 7 N.N.C. §355(A). The names of those deemed qualified are forwarded to the President of the Navajo Nation for appointment. The appointments of the President are subject to Navajo Nation Council confirmation.
- B. The Law and Order Committee has delegated the responsibility and authority to the Judicial Conduct Commission regarding the screening of applicants for and recommendation of probationary appointment of Judges and Justices of the Navajo Nation by Resolution LOCS-19-18.

SECTION TWO. FINDINGS.

- A. To improve the quality and effectiveness of the justice system, the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch needs to have a fully seated judiciary; however, there are nine vacancies for Navajo Nation District Court Judge position.
- B. While the Navajo Nation Code, Title 2, states that the Navajo Nation President shall appoint District Court Judges "only from among those named in the panel submitted" by the Law and Order Committee, in order to address the Navajo Nation's immediate need for judges, the Judicial Conduct Commission contends that submitting one applicant to the Navajo Nation President is sufficient because of the dire need for judges.
- C. The Judicial Conduct Commission reviewed the applicant's qualifications for judicial appointment.
- D. The Judicial Conduct Commission determines that Malcolm Laughing meets the qualifications for appointment as a probationary Navajo Nation District Court Judge and is qualified for the position of Navajo Nation Judge.

SECTION THREE. RECOMMENDATION FOR PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENT

- A. The Judicial Conduct Commission recommends to the Navajo Nation President that Malcolm Laughing be appointed as District Court Judge, subject to the Navajo Nation Council's confirmation. 2 N.N.C. §601(B)(7)(2012)

SECTION FOUR. DIRECTIVE.

The Office of Human Resources shall immediately submit to the Navajo Nation President all documents provided by the applicant recommended for appointment. Confidential information within application documents shall remain protected except upon authorized disclosure by the applicant. 2 N.N.C. § 81 et seq. (2009)

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Judicial Conduct Commission at a duly called meeting at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino and Resort Conference Room, Twin Arrows, Navajo Nation (Arizona), at which a quorum was present and that same was passed by a vote of 3 in favor and 0 opposed this 5th day of June 2019.



Robert Yazzie, Chairman
Judicial Conduct Commission

Motion: Judy Apachee
Second: Manley Begay

THE NAVAJO NATION

JONATHAN NEZ | PRESIDENT MYRON LIZER | VICE PRESIDENT



November 4, 2019

Malcolm Laughing
PO Box
Window Rock, AZ 86515

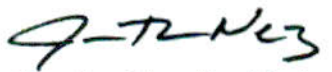
RE: Judicial Appointment

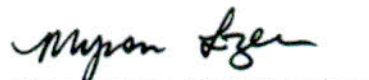
Dear Mr. Laughing,

Thank you for your interest in serving as a Navajo Nation judge. There are many fine Navajo judges who have come before you and we trust you will uphold the honor of the Navajo courts they have built over the decades. We appreciate the time you spent with us talking about your interest and experience in the legal system. Your work history gives you the unique perspective of the needs of our Navajo People as they navigate the judicial system and we hope you will use this experience in your decision making. Based on our discussion with you and review of your résumé it is our pleasure to recommend your appointment as a judge of the Navajo courts.

The recommendation will be forwarded to the Navajo Nation Council for final action. We wish you the best. God bless you.

Sincerely,


Jonathan Nez, President
THE NAVAJO NATION

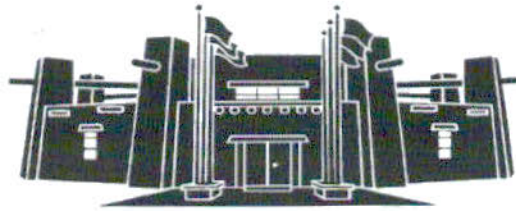

Myron Lizer, Vice President
THE NAVAJO NATION

EXHIBIT

tabbles

C

Employment Application



MEMORANDUM

To : Hon. Otto Tso, Council Delegate
Navajo Nation Council

From : 
Ron Haven, Attorney
Office of Legislative Counsel

Date : November 27, 2019

Re : AN ACTION RELATING TO THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL;
CONFIRMING THE PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENT OF MALCOLM
LAUGHING AS NAVAJO NATION DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

As requested, I have prepared the above-referenced proposed resolution and associated legislative summary sheet pursuant to your request for legislative drafting. The resolution drafted is legally sufficient, although, as with all legislation, challenges are possible in the courts. You are advised and encouraged to review the proposed resolution to ensure that it is drafted to your satisfaction. If you are satisfied with the proposed resolution, please sign it as "sponsor" and submit it to the Office of Legislative Services where it will be given a tracking number and sent to the Office of the Speaker for assignment. As you may be aware, the Speaker is authorized to refer this proposed resolution to other committees than those stated in the title.

If the proposed resolution is unacceptable to you, please contact me at the Office of Legislative Counsel and advise me of the changes you would like made to the proposed resolution. Ahéhee'.

OLC # 19-630-1

THE NAVAJO NATION
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
INTERNET PUBLIC REVIEW PUBLICATION



LEGISLATION NO: _0365-19_____ SPONSOR: Otto Tso

TITLE: An Action Relating to the Navajo Nation Council; Confirming the probationary appointment of Malcolm Laughing as Navajo Nation District Court Judge

Date posted: November 27, 2019 at 2:02pm

Digital comments may be e-mailed to comments@navajo-nsn.gov

Written comments may be mailed to:

Executive Director
Office of Legislative Services
P.O. Box 3390
Window Rock, AZ 86515
(928) 871-7590

Comments may be made in the form of chapter resolutions, letters, position papers, etc. Please include your name, position title, address for written comments; a valid e-mail address is required. Anonymous comments will not be included in the Legislation packet.

Please note: This digital copy is being provided for the benefit of the Navajo Nation chapters and public use. Any political use is prohibited. All written comments received become the property of the Navajo Nation and will be forwarded to the assigned Navajo Nation Council standing committee(s) and/or the Navajo Nation Council for review. Any tampering with public records are punishable by Navajo Nation law pursuant to 17 N.N.C. §374 *et. seq.*

**THE NAVAJO NATION
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
INTERNET PUBLIC REVIEW SUMMARY**

LEGISLATION NO.: 0365-19

SPONSOR: Honorable Otto Tso


TITLE: An Action Relating to the Navajo Nation Council; Confirming the probationary appointment of Malcolm Laughing as Navajo Nation District Court Judge

Posted: November 27, 2019 at 2:02 PM

5 DAY Comment Period Ended: December 02, 2019

Digital Comments received:

Comments Supporting	<i>None</i>
Comments Opposing	<i>None</i>
Inconclusive Comments	<i>None</i>



**Legislative Tracking Secretary
Office of Legislative Services**

12/03/19 8:54 AM

Date/Time

THE NAVAJO NATION
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
INTERNET PUBLIC REVIEW SUMMARY

LEGISLATION NO.: 0365-19

SPONSOR: Honorable Otto Tso

TITLE: An Action Relating to the Navajo Nation Council; Confirming the probationary appointment of Malcolm Laughing as Navajo Nation District Court Judge

Posted: November 27, 2019 at 2:02 PM

5 DAY Comment Period Ended: December 02, 2019

Digital Comments received:

Comments Supporting	<i>None</i>
Comments Opposing	1) Tyson Yazzie, NN Bar Association member
Inconclusive Comments	<i>None</i>



Legislative Tracking Secretary
Office of Legislative Services

12/04/19 3:14PM

Date/Time

From: Tyson Yazzie <@du>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2019 10:54 AM
To: comments
Subject: Public Comment for Legislation No. 0365-19: Legislation to Confirm Appointment of Malcolm Laughing as a District Court Judge
Attachments: Malcolm Laughing Court Trial Transcript.pdf

To Whom It May Concern:

Through this email, I am writing in **opposition** to Legislation No. 0365-19. My views are mine only and do not reflect the views of my employer.

I am a member of the Navajo Nation Bar Association and have been practicing law in the Navajo Nation courts as a prosecutor since 2012. I do not know Mr. Malcolm Laughing personally. My views and my opposition are based on the experiences I've had with Mr. Laughing in prior criminal cases in which Mr. Laughing represented criminal defendants. Based on a particular experience in Chinle District Court, I believe that Mr. Laughing **lacks integrity, candor, and a sense of fairness** to serve as a District Court Judge. On January 22, 2018, Mr. Laughing and I appeared before the Chinle District Court for a trial. Relying on Mr. Laughing's eagerness to settle the criminal cases through a plea agreement (Mr. Laughing reached out to me on a Friday prior to the trial which was scheduled for Monday morning), I instructed the police officer who was the victim to not appear for the trial. I showed up at the trial ready to finalize a plea agreement with Mr. Laughing. I told him that I instructed the police officer not to appear because we were going to enter into a plea agreement. Mr. Laughing instantly shut down and refused to talk with me about a plea agreement. He then told the clerk that his client was ready for the hearing and wished to have the judge call the case and call the hearing to order. The judge then called the case. Mr. Laughing took me by surprise and had an unfair advantage. In the end, the Court dismissed the case **with prejudice** (which means that the criminal cases could never be refiled again). I've attached the transcript of that hearing to this email. I believe that Mr. Laughing will be unfair as a District Court Judge. Moreover, I believe that Mr. Laughing will be untruthful as a District Court Judge. Therefore, I strongly urge the Navajo Nation Council to oppose Mr. Laughing's probationary appointment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this comment.

Respectfully,

Tyson Yazzie
Tyson Yazzie
Post Office Box
Arizona
e-mail |
Cell Phone |

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE NAVAJO NATION
JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF CHINLE, ARIZONA

The Navajo Nation,
Plaintiff,

DOCKET NOS.
CH-CR-748-16
CH-CR-749-16

v.

COURT TRIAL

Jarrett Begay,
Defendant.

HELD AT: NAVAJO NATION DISTRICT COURT, CHINLE, ARIZONA
January 22, 2018 at 9:00 A.M.

BEFORE: HONORABLE Rudy I. Bedonie
District Judge

APPEARANCES: Tyson Yazzie, Prosecutor
The Navajo Nation

Malcolm M. Laughing,
Counsel for Defendant

Jarrett Begay,
Defendant

TRANSCRIBER: TYSON YAZZIE
Senior Prosecutor

SOURCE: CD (Audio) - January 22, 2018

PROCEEDINGS

(9:06 A.M.)

COURT CLERK: Chinle District Court will now be in session before the Honorable Rudy I. Bedonie. You may be seated.

JUDGE: Again, on this 22nd day of January, 2018, in the Judicial District of Chinle, Chinle District Court. There are pending complaints that are scheduled for hearings, which the Court needs to address. So, without further delay, call the case that is scheduled.

COURT CLERK: Chinle District Court will call case number CH-CR-748-16 and CH-CR-749-16. And...its scheduled for a bench trial today. And counsel for Defendant, Malcolm Laughing is present.

JUDGE: Again, there's pending complaints before the Court, criminal complaints. Again, the plaintiff in this cause, Navajo Nation?

YAZZIE: Good morning Your Honor, Tyson Yazzie appearing for the Navajo Nation.

JUDGE: The defendant in this cause, Jarrett Begay?

DEFENDANT: Here.

LAUGHING: He's present Your Honor.

JUDGE: Okay. Counsel for Defendant?

LAUGHING: Good morning Your Honor. Malcolm Laughing present.

JUDGE: Okay. Plaintiff's counsel, are you ready to proceed?

YAZZIE: Yes, Your Honor, I do have...

JUDGE: Do you have any preliminary motion for the Court?

YAZZIE: Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE: You can go ahead and present your preliminary motion.

YAZZIE:

Uh, thank you, Your Honor. Um, in this case, the Navajo Nation, um, did charge the criminal defendant with two criminal charges. There's a criminal nuisance charge as well as a battery upon a peace officer charge. And, uh, Navajo Nation, uh, did speak with the, uh, defendant's appointed counsel last Friday. And based on the representations that were made to the prosecutor, there was an indication that this case would be settled through a plea agreement. Um, and then on that basis, Navajo Nation informed our primary victim, which is also our main witness, Officer Kee Begay, not to be present. But, all of a sudden this morning, I guess that plan has changed from the defense side. So, with that, we don't have Officer Kee Begay here. Um, this case was previously scheduled for a previously-scheduled trial back on November 14, 2017. And, at that time, the Navajo prosecutor at that point in time was able to accommodate Mr. Laughing's schedule and his request for a continuance when his daughter...when he had to fly out of Albuquerque, New Mexico to see his daughter in college on the East Coast. So, based on that, the preliminary motion would be for Navajo Nation to move for a dismissal without prejudice. And, I can thereafter contact the primary victim Officer Kee Begay to see if he wishes to refile that criminal battery upon a peace officer charge. Thank you.

JUDGE:

Counsel for Defendant, are you ready to proceed?

LAUGHING:

Your Honor, uh, yes we are.

JUDGE:

Okay, do you have any preliminary motion for the Court.

LAUGHING:

Well, just to, uh, say that we agree with the Navajo Nation's motion to dismiss at this time. Your Honor, this is, uh, two

complaints that have been pending since October of 2016, well over a year now. We're finally getting to a trial. Today's trial, it was scheduled a 9 o'clock. **People talk about possible settlements all the time.** But, as of today, there is no settlement. The Nation has an obligation to be ready to go to trial today at 9 o'clock with all its witnesses. They're not prepared. And, so we concur with their motion to dismiss. They're asking without prejudice. The problem we have is, again, they've used up the Court's resources since October of 2016 to now. That's a lot of time and effort that was given to this case just to not be ready. And then to drag this defendant through this whole proceeding for a year and half to not be ready. That is uncalled for. So, based on that, we ask for a dismissal with prejudice so that the Navajo Nation can't be given the luxury of refileing this case. So, again, we ask the Court to grant the motion to dismiss and close this matter with the Court. Thank you.

JUDGE:

Do you have any rebuttal?

YAZZIE:

Yes, Your Honor. The reason for "without prejudice" would be in the interest of fairness. The Navajo Nation has never - according the Court records here - Navajo Nation has never attempted to curtail or take Mr. Laughing by any surprise. His request for a continuance for the previous court trial was at his request. He speaks of this matter pending for too long with the Court while he's the one - the defense counsel - is the one who requested a continuance of a previously scheduled court trial. And this court trial would have occurred today had Mr. Laughing not reached out to the prosecutor last Friday and told the prosecutor that there was a plea agreement that he would speak with his client about that would schedule this court

trial...that would settle the court...vacate the court trial. So, based on that, in the interest of fairness, Navajo Nation would request without prejudice. And those are the reasons.

JUDGE:

Again, as I stated, there is a pending criminal complaint before the Court in these proceedings. The cause of action, counsel has indicated that there was talk about settlement, a stipulation on the issues on this criminal complaint. On the one end is that they have come, that they were going to make an agreement as to the proceeding in this cause of action. There was scheduled prior where the counsel has made the, defense counsel, made the motion for continuance allowing him to attend to his personal business and come back, rescheduling this proceeding. The Court did comply with the request of counsel. You began by indicating that there was talk about stipulation and now there's indication there's now. And then there's indication that counsel, or the counsel for Navajo Nation excused the witness in these proceedings. (inaudible) Based on that, the counsel is asking the Court to dismiss - Plaintiff's counsel - to dismiss this cause without prejudice. On the other hand, counsel for the defendant is requesting to dismiss this with prejudice. The issue is that the Nation should be prepared to proceed, they're prolonging this proceeding. They shouldn't be. Again the Court is listening for how this will be prejudicial to the defendant. There's nothing indicating as such by the defense counsel. But, again, reviewing the records before the Court, the defendant, the incident did happen back in twenty-six, or 2016, October of 2016. From October 2016, he was arraigned on the twentieth day of, on the 2017 of January. From there, proceedings started. Several

counsel has been appointed for him and they have withdrew from these proceedings. First, there was public defender, there was another counsel, pretrial scheduling, continuances cases, and even (inaudible) the Court issued a bench warrant to have him come back before the Court and had to appoint him counsel again. Today, they've indicated they're ready to proceed. On the other hand, anytime the Court issues subpoenas to these individuals, they should be in compliance with those. There's even instructions on there "if you don't obey this subpoena, you may be liable to prosecution and a warrant may be issued for your arrest." The Court issued these subpoenas for them to be in compliance. The Court is the only one that can excuse these witnesses. All the witnesses, everybody has been served - Jerry Begay, Maria Begay, and Kee Begay - in these proceedings. Some of the witnesses are properly present but the officer is the only one that is not present. So, based on the chronological events of the case, since the initiating of the petition, the prolonged continued on with that, we need to have these, especially in these criminal proceedings, expedite these cases. Again, there are cases before the Court, we need to look at the rights of the individual, speedy trial, prolonging it will be prejudicial, it's been over a year. That's what the Court is looking at (inaudible) to say that is cause for prejudicial. For them to say to dismiss it without prejudice, and then to inform the officer to have them refiled that is not good practice. So, the Court will dismiss this cause of action without - with prejudice. Counsel for Plaintiff, do you have any questions?

YAZZIE:

No questions, Your Honor.

JUDGE:

Defense counsel?

LAUGHING: None Your Honor.

JUDGE: Then you may be excused. Counsel for Defendant, submit an order...

LAUGHING: Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE: Dismissal...within five days. Call the next case.

COURT CLERK: No further cases for Chinle.

JUDGE: (inaudible)

YAZZIE: [addressing Malcolm Laughing] I will never accept your representations again.

(9:20 A.M.)

END OF TRANSCRIPTS

[STOPS HERE AS PROCEEDINGS END]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tyson Yazzie, certify that the foregoing transcript of proceedings in the Navajo Nation District Court, Chinle, Arizona, Navajo Nation, Navajo Nation v. Jarrett Begay, Docket No. CH-CR-748/749-16, is a true and accurate record of the proceedings, to the best of my ability to transcribe the proceedings.

Signature: Tyazzi

Date: 12.03.2019