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CHIEF JUSTICE JAYNE DELIVERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne delivered her quarterly report to the Navajo Nation Council during its summer session on Monday, July 16, 2018. In the report, she noted that one of the mandates of the Judicial Branch is to educate the people.

She said that the Judicial Branch utilizes fundamental law or Diné bi beenahaz'áanii to make decisions. "One of the important things we do is we remain independent. We remain unbiased," she said. "We are keeping to the mandate that was given to us by our naat'áaniis."

Chief Justice Jayne said that the numbers of cases in the Navajo courts are increasing which impacts judges and justices because of the high number of vacancies on the bench. The current judges and justices are overworked and cases are continuing to increase, she said. “We are at a critical point in the Judicial Branch,” she said.

The chief justice said that the fundamental tenet of an independent judiciary is to have a full judiciary and that is what the Judicial Branch is moving toward. She said that the branch has made an effort to find individuals to apply for positions of judge and associate justice.

Noting that the branch presented its proposed general fund budget for Fiscal Year 2019 last week to the Law and Order Committee, Chief Justice Jayne said that the Judicial Branch budget is driven by statistics and performance. She said that she told her staff after presenting the proposed budget to the Law and Order Committee that the branch would now have to work on the FY 2020 budget. She also thanked the Law and Order Committee for working with her for the past six months since she has become Chief Justice of the Judicial Branch.

The chief justice said that one of the successes of the branch has been the grant-funded Veterans Justice Outreach Project. She said that the Navajo courts try to help people in the justice system because of the relationships among our people, particularly through projects targeting veterans, teens and others.

Another success of the branch is implementation of ePayment where the public in certain judicial districts are able to pay their civil traffic fines by credit card through the telephone, online or in person. Chief Justice Jayne said she is anticipating that all judicial districts will be able to accept credit card payments by the end of the calendar year.

The quarterly report of the Judicial Branch for Fiscal Year 2018 Third Quarter is available on the www.navajocourts.org website.

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