



**Contact:** Karen Francis, *Government Relations Officer*  
Office of the Chief Justice

**JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION**

Office: 928-871-6920

E-mail: [karenfrancis@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:karenfrancis@navajo-nsn.gov)

<http://www.navajocourts.org>

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SCREENING AND RECOMMENDATION OF PROBATIONARY JUDGES  
DELEGATED TO JUDICIAL CONDUCT COMMISSION**

The Judicial Conduct Commission has been delegated the authority to screen judge and justice applicants and recommend probationary appointment of judges and justices of the Navajo Nation.

The Law and Order Committee of the Navajo Nation Council approved legislation sponsored by Delegate Otto Tso to amend the Commission's plan of operation and to delegate the Committee's authority pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 601(B)(2), which allows the Committee to delegate responsibilities and authorities as appropriate for efficiency and streamlining of government processes.

With the legislation, the Committee also approved the Rules and Regulations that will govern the Commission's delegated authority to screen applicants and recommend probationary appointment of judges and justices.

Pursuant to Navajo Nation law, the President of the Navajo Nation must still appoint probationary judges and justices and the Navajo Nation Council still has the authority to confirm those appointments. Screening and recommending probationary appointment are only the first steps in the process of getting judges and justices on the bench.

According to the rules, the executive director of the Commission, or the Judicial Branch's human resources director in the absence of an executive director, shall receive applications for the positions of judge and justice. The executive director verifies qualifications and for those who meet the qualifications, schedules a writing test and interview to be held within 90 days. The Commission is to implement the writing test through a 5-10 page writing sample analyzing Navajo legal issues. The Commission will also develop interview questions and conduct the interview of the applicants. The Commission then has the responsibility to evaluate the applicants and make recommendations by resolution to the President of the Navajo Nation.

The Law and Order Committee had discussed the possibility of delegating its authority with the Judicial Conduct Commission during several work sessions. Committee members expressed that they believed the Commission had the expertise to conduct the screening and recommendation. The Commission is composed of one retired Navajo Nation judge, one retired state or federal judge, two Navajo Nation Bar Association members, and one public member appointed by the Law and Order Committee.

The sitting Judicial Conduct Commission members include Chairman Robert Yazzie, a retired Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation; Vice Chairman Dr. Manley Begay, a professor of Indigenous Studies at Northern Arizona University; William Thorne, a retired state trial and appellate judge; Troy Eid, a former U.S. Attorney; and Judy Apachee, an attorney who has been awarded for her pro bono work.

There are currently nine judge positions and one associate justice position that are vacant. The Judicial Branch is accepting applications for these positions through its Human Resources Office.

The rules for the process are available on the [www.navajocourts.org](http://www.navajocourts.org) website on the Judicial Conduct Commission webpage.

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