

## Letter to the Editor: Rep. Johnson shares her roots; hope for the future

Written by Gallupsun Staff  
Friday, 06 May 2016 03:44

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When I was first elected to the New Mexico House of Representatives, I was proud to have earned the support of my people of House District 5 in McKinley & San Juan Counties to represent their voice in the Roundhouse. And as a Navajo woman, I brought my unique perspective to the Legislature to build a more secure economic future that also preserves and promotes our Navajo Language and culture.

I have seen firsthand how the actions taken within the Legislature can have a major impact on all New Mexicans in our communities. I was born and raised in Crownpoint on the Eastern Navajo Reservation, therefore, I know firsthand about the needs for community support and capital projects throughout the various rural and Chapter communities. My understanding of the needs of our district has been vital in considering key decisions in the legislature, including the state's budget, capital outlay and advocacy for social issues across the board.

As a legislator, I must put our children and students first. As my great grandparents put my educational future first, I must do the same for our children today, as they deserve every opportunity to work hard and to achieve their dreams. I will always encourage these educational opportunities to begin as early as possible in a child's life, so that we can have the greatest positive impact by elevating our people to their highest potential. This is the reason why I have been advocating to increase the number of providers for early childhood development so that more of our children can receive early childhood education and services. Not only will this action benefit our children, but it will also create jobs and provide a living wage to those who become providers. The value we place in our children is the value we place in our entire community.

The roots of my community and of who I am are strong and deep. We are a strong, proud and beautiful people. Preserving our history is vital to all of us. This is why my work to safeguard the sacred sites within Chaco Canyon has brought me to the forefront of collaboration with many entities and elected officials. I am proud to be a strong voice for preserving sacred and historical

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sites. It is within these sacred sites we will preserve our story as our elders have instilled. I know that without our shared story as a district and as a diverse community, I would not be who I am today.

Our sacred sites are just an earlier chapter in a larger story that includes lessons in sacrifice, strength and ingenuity. Sharing these stories with the world is a priority of mine. I have always represented my communities with the utmost respect from the Arizona State Capitol to the halls of Congress in Washington DC, and to the many rural communities across Indian Country during my time with the National Indian Health Board and the National Indian Education Association. As a result, I have teamed up with Senator John Pinto by introducing a memorial to begin the process of building a National Code Talker Museum in Washington D.C., so that their contributions can be understood and recognized carefully. Our freedom is the direct result of the sacrifices of our Navajo Code Talkers during the Second World War.

I am honored to serve as your Representative, and I must acknowledge the challenges facing far too many people in the district. It is not right that too many who work hard and play by the rules are unable to make ends meet. I too have faced hardships in my own life, and I believe we can work together and put the betterment of everyone ahead of politics. That is why I will continue fighting every day to ensure our stories are heard, and that our future will be filled with opportunity.

***Representative Doreen Wonda Johnson***

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