

## Former NN president Ben Shelly files for House seat held by Martinez

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### Name snafu on ballot

SANTA FE – Former Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly filed to run Tuesday for the soon-to-be-vacant District 69 New Mexico House of Representatives seat. Shelly is seeking the seat being vacated by former N.M. Speaker of the House W. Ken Martinez, D-Grants. Martinez, an attorney, is retiring from public office. The son of a former N.M. Speaker of the House, Martinez began serving the state Legislature in 1999.

“Today, I accept a new challenge as I run for a state office in becoming a lawmaker,” Shelly said upon filing at the state secretary of state office in Santa Fe. “I have been a registered Democrat all of my life.”

Since ending his four-year tenure as president in 2015, Shelly, who hails from Thoreau, has been operating the Shelly Trucking and Excavating LLC. “Over the next three months I want to hear from the people about their concerns,” Shelly said. “I will be traveling throughout the six counties.”

While registering at the McKinley County Courthouse last week with the required written petitions, Shelly’s voter registration card with its original registration in 2005, indicated he was listed in voter records as “Bennie Shelly.” A change could not be made due to a proclamation by Gov. Susana Martinez in which the last day for changes was Jan. 25, 2016, Shelly spokesman Desmond Tome said.

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Therefore, Shelly's name for the June 7 primary election will appear on the ballot as "Bennie Shelly" until a technical correction can be made following the election, Tome said.

Tome said Shelly's first scheduled public appearance will be March 15 at 7 pm at the Cibola County Complex in Grants. District 69 includes parts of McKinley, Cibola, Valencia, Bernalillo, Socorro and San Juan counties.

Besides Shelly, Harry Garcia and Terry Fletcher of Grants and Lloyd Felipe of Acoma Pueblo are running for the District 69 post. Shelly, 68, is the first Navajo from New Mexico to ever hold the Navajo Nation president's job. Shelly was also vice president of the Navajo Nation from 2007 to 2011.

*Bernie Dotson contributed to this report.*