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JUDICIAL BRANCH ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVES

During her report to the Navajo Nation Council on Monday, April 15, 2024, Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne announced two new initiatives by the Hashkééjį Nahat'á (Judicial Branch), including a judicial law clerkship program and an internship and externship program. The Branch is currently seeking applicants for both programs.

“The new programs are a way to actively involve college and law school students and law school graduates in the Navajo Nation government and help them build a substantial working knowledge of the role and function of the courts,” said Chief Justice Jayne.

The Hashkééjį Nahat'á has one appellate court (Supreme Court), eleven judicial districts and one circuit court. Law school graduates may apply for the judicial law clerk position and college and law school students may apply for an internship or externship at these courts.

The judicial law clerk is a regular status full-time or part-time two-year appointment. Applicants for the judicial law clerk positions must be graduates of an American Bar Association accredited law school or certified as having completed all law school studies and requirements by the time of appointment. The first group for the clerkship positions is expected to begin in Fall 2024.

The judicial law clerk position provides the opportunity to strengthen legal research and writing skills, become well versed in court rules and procedures, and interact with judges and justices on a regular basis. Judicial law clerks may also have the opportunity to become staff attorneys or other legal positions within the Branch after completing the program.

“The clerkship provides law school graduates an opportunity to experience Navajo jurisprudence while creating opportunities for the entire Navajo Nation with new legal minds returning to the Nation to work in various legal fields,” said Chief Justice Jayne.

Applicants for the internships and/or externships must be (1) students currently enrolled in an accredited ABA law school, or (2) enrolled in a bachelor's degree program at an accredited college or university and have taken or are currently enrolled in legal writing and Diné Fundamental Law or Federal Indian law or similar courses. Applicants should also demonstrate an interest in understanding the workings of the Navajo Nation court system and an interest in a career in public service. Internships may be paid or voluntary. Externships are performed in conjunction with a supervising law professor for law school credit.

Interns and externs at each court will have the opportunity to observe court proceedings, review filings and evidence submitted by the parties, and conduct legal research and writing regarding a variety of matters that come before the court. In addition, all students can expect to work closely with the assigned judge or justice.

Applicants for the programs may submit an application form, resume, writing sample and transcripts. An interview will be required.

For more information regarding these opportunities, please visit the Judicial Branch website at <https://courts.navajo-nsn.gov>.

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