



# CHEROKEE PHOENIX



## Hoskin talks infrastructure act with Biden



COURTESY  
President Biden holds a virtual meeting on Aug. 11 with leaders from across the country, including Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., to discuss a recently passed Senate bill regarding infrastructure.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act clears the Senate, and was bound for the U.S. House of Representatives.

BY CHAD HUNTER  
Reporter

TAHLEQUAH – From the Cherokee Nation reservation, Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. addressed President Joe Biden during a virtual discussion Aug. 11 on the importance of a sprawling bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that was approved by the Senate 69-30 the previous day. “It was an honor to participate in Wednesday’s White House virtual meeting with President Biden,” said Hoskin, who was among a small panel of other elected leaders tapped to speak with the president. “Across Indian Country, we value Pres-

ident Biden’s priority to invest in infrastructure improvements. The bipartisan bill will address longstanding needs we have within our Cherokee communities, including broadband connectivity growth, improved roads and bridges, additional clean and sustainable energy projects and increased access to safe drinking water and treatment systems.”

According to the White House, the nearly \$1 trillion act includes \$550 billion in investment in America’s roads and bridges, water infrastructure, resilience, internet and more over several years.

SEE ACT, 2

## Taylor sworn in as Nation’s newest treasurer

BY CHAD HUNTER  
Reporter

TAHLEQUAH – During a special Tribal Council meeting on Aug. 26, former Dist. 15 Tribal Councilor Janees Taylor was unanimously confirmed as the Cherokee Nation’s new treasurer.

“I just want to say thank you for the opportunity,” Taylor, of Pryor, told the Council. “I was actually over there working through some things that we’re working on last minute for the COVID funds, and it’s an exciting time to be entrusted with this position. I appreciate your support.”

Taylor’s two-term, eight-year run as Dist. 15’s representative on the Council ended Aug. 14. Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. nominated Taylor for treasurer to replace Tralynna Scott, who accepted a position as chief economist for Cherokee Nation Businesses.

“Janees Taylor has the experience and determination it takes to oversee the Cherokee Nation’s finances, in-

SEE TAYLOR, 7



COURTESY  
Cherokee Nation Supreme Court Justice Rex Earl Starr, left, administers the oath of office to nine tribal councilors for the 2021-25 term on Aug. 14 in Tahlequah.

## Supreme Court tosses Dist. 7 election appeal

BY CHAD HUNTER  
Reporter

TAHLEQUAH – The Cherokee Nation’s Supreme Court on Aug. 8 dismissed a legal challenge to results of July’s Dist. 7 Tribal Council race in Adair County.

The losing candidate in July 24’s runoff, David Comingdeer, first unsuccessfully sought a recount in the 638-594 race, then filed a complaint against the winner, Joshua Sam, and the CN Election Commission. In its Aug. 8 opinion, the court deemed Comingdeer’s challenge “frivolous and dismissed with prejudice for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.”

Comingdeer had initially asked for a recount that “failed to proceed,” according to the court, for not providing proper notice to his opponent. Comingdeer’s election appeal, filed Aug. 2, alleged that the EC illegally interfered with the election outcome by mailing absentee ballot request forms along with a letter supporting

SEE CHALLENGE, 4

Five legislators are new members while four are incumbents.

BY D. SEAN ROWLEY  
Senior Reporter

Before a crowd of about 200 that included family, friends and fellow tribal officials, nine members of the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council took their oaths of office on Aug. 14 for four-year terms lasting until mid-2025.

Those sworn into office were Candessa Tehee of Dist. 2, Michael Dobbins of Dist. 4, E.O. Smith of Dist. 5, Joshua Sam of Dist. 7, Mike Shambaugh of Dist. 9, Melvina Shotpouch of Dist. 10, Victoria Vazquez of Dist. 11, Danny Collision of Dist. 15 and Johnny Kidwell representing the At-Large district.

Tehee, Sam, Shotpouch, Callison and Kidwell are newly elected to the council. The others were re-elected to their seats.

Joe Byrd, outgoing Council speaker and Dist. 2 councilor, introduced the speakers and performances by the Cherokee National Youth Choir and Cherokee Circle.

“Cherokees, for the past few years, our tribe – like many other people in the United States – have gone through tremendous challenges,” Byrd said. “Our government and the Cherokee people have gone through the government shutdown. We’re still going through the pandemic. We’re also going against opposition of organiza-

tions and other people constantly challenging our sovereignty and who we are as people.”

CN Supreme Court Justice Rex Earl Starr administered the oaths of office, and Byrd delivered the charge before the councilors took their oaths.

“As outgoing speaker of the Council, it is my privilege to provide our incoming councilors with their charge of duty,” he said. “As a Cherokee Nation tribal councilor, you must conduct yourself in such a manner so as to bring honor and dignity to the position to which the Cherokee citizens have elected you.”

As a long-time Council member, Byrd told those awaiting the oath that listening was the most important skill they would need as servants of the people.

“Listen to your constituents,” he said. “Listen to your fellow Council members. Listen to the cabinet members and department directors. They possess a wealth of knowledge and are willing to help with whatever situation you find yourself facing.”

Byrd encouraged them to protect the CN’s culture and sovereignty, saying they would “serve their people well” by maintaining such priorities.

SEE COUNCIL, 3

## Registrar, former Tribal Councilor Hargis dies at 56



Frankie Hargis

BY STAFF REPORTS

STILWELL – Cherokee Nation Registrar and former Dist. 7 Tribal Councilor Frankie Darlene Hargis passed away unexpectedly on Aug. 15. She was 56.

“Frankie was a true public servant of the Cherokee people,” said Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin. “As an educational professional, to her service on the Tribal Council, to her years as our constitutionally appointed registrar, she served always with a sense of duty to, and love for, the Cherokee people. Her work touched the lives of thousands of Cherokees and shaped public policy in a way that has made Cherokee Nation stronger and more secure.”

Hoskin added that Hargis was “also a

dear friend.”

“The first lady and I extend our condolences to Frankie’s family. We mourn in her loss and celebrate her beautiful life,” he said.

As a tribal councilor, she began serving western Adair County or Dist. 7 beginning in 2011 when she was elected in a special election to replace S. Joe Crittenden, who resigned after being elected deputy chief. She served her first full term after being re-elected in 2013. She won the seat again in 2017.

“I chose to run for re-election because I have enjoyed serving the Cherokee people,” she said in an interview with the Cherokee Phoenix in August 2017. “There are projects that I want to see completed, and there is still work

to be done.”

Born to Michael Frank Hargis and Susan Charmaine Young on July 19, 1965, in Claremore, she was raised in Stilwell and graduated from Stilwell High School and then from Northeastern State University with a bachelor’s degree in education. She worked for the CN and Cherokee Nation Enterprises in several capacities before being elected to serve Adair County.

“I was raised in Adair County, raised my children here and want only the best for Cherokees in this district. We have made great strides in several areas, including health care, education and housing,” she said in August 2017.

SEE HARGIS, 3