



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Speaker Bates commends the approval of funding for the Navajo Nation in the omnibus spending bill**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) commended the passage of the \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill by Congress on Thursday and signed by President Trump on Friday. The bill will fund the federal government for the remaining 2018 fiscal year and includes funding increases that will benefit the Navajo Nation.

The spending bill will provide \$5.5 billion for Indian Health Service, a 10-percent increase and over \$3 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education, which represents a seven-percent increase from the previous budget.

Speaker Bates thanked the members of the Navajo Nation Council for their advocacy and lobbying efforts at the federal level, which he said were very instrumental in convincing congressional and senate members to vote in support of the funding increases.

“My Council colleagues have met on numerous occasions to advocate for funding for various initiatives and issues,” stated Speaker Bates.

The spending bill also includes over \$15 million for the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation, which was established to oversee the relocation of Navajo people who were affected by the Navajo-Hopi land dispute settlement, operating under Public Law 93-531. Speaker Bates said he supports ONHIR to continue helping Navajo people, especially after the recent possibility of the office’s closure.

In addition, the spending bill provides an approximate \$1.3 million increase for operations and maintenance costs for the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project specifically for the Gallegos Pumping Plant, which does not currently operate at its full capacity due to federal funding shortages over the years. The NIIP is operated and maintained through the Public Law 93-638 federal contract between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Navajo Agricultural Products Industry.

In April 2017, the Council created the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project Negotiation Subcommittee composed of Council Delegates Steven Begay, Benjamin L. Bennett, Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Leonard

Tsosie, and Speaker Bates to advocate for the completion of the federally created project and for increased operations and maintenance funds from the federal government. The group has met with congressional members on several occasions and has presented the NIIP needs to the Western Caucus Foundation on two recent occasions. The caucus membership includes House and Senate members from both political parties that represent states in the western portion of the country.

In regards to the Navajo Housing Authority, the budget bill states that \$655,000,000 would remain available until September 2022. The funding through the Native American Housing and Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996 is distributed to tribes for housing needs based on several factors including census data.

NHA has risked losing millions of dollars recently due to several concerns including the lack of homes being built. Speaker Bates noted that the Council has taken several measures over the years to ensure more accountability and efficiency among NHA officials.

Speaker Bates said he is thankful to his Council colleagues and for the members of Congress that continually lobby and advocate for important funding for the Navajo people. President Trump signed and approved the \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill on Friday.

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