



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2020

**Navajo Nation Council assures students,
returning relatives that borders are not closed**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — After reports circulated Wednesday that the Navajo Nation was issuing a closure of its borders, Speaker Seth Damon of the 24th Navajo Nation Council issued a message clarifying the state of the Nation's borders in light of developing responses to coronavirus (COVID-19).

“We want to assure the public that any Navajo person wanting to return home to relatives or family members, that they will not be turned away at Navajo Nation borders. We still want to urge caution, however, if anyone is returning from areas with confirmed COVID-19 cases. It's important that we utilize this moment to spread the message that fever, cough or shortness of breath symptoms should be checked by health care professionals,” said Speaker Seth Damon.

Speaker Damon also encouraged all members of the Navajo Nation and the general public limit their overall movement to essential or vital travel. “We're aware that students across the country are making their way back to the Navajo Nation and the surrounding areas. They should not worry that the Navajo Nation's borders are closed,” said Speaker Damon.

In a memorandum issued Wednesday, Legislative Branch programs were directed to close until further notice by the Office of the Speaker. That directive is intended to ensure proper precautions are taken by the Legislative Branch to prevent potential exposure to Navajo elders, community members, Navajo Nation employees and members of the general public.

Tribal parks and popular tourist destinations were also closed last week in an attempt to discourage travel onto the Navajo Nation by visitors from across the globe. Navajo Nation leaders identified tribal parks as critical spaces where transmission is more likely. The Navajo Nation also issued closures for other branch program offices, schools and educational facilities, and more.

“Certainly, anyone that isn't a member of the Navajo Nation that is thinking of visiting Navajoland at this time, we strongly discourage them from doing so out of an abundance of caution for our most vulnerable populations. It's a difficult thing to expect of anyone, especially those that have come from another country to our area. But, it is absolutely necessary to protect our elders, children, and the Navajo people,” said 24th Navajo Nation Council Delegate Otto Tso.

More information on coronavirus, COVID-19, can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website online at www.cdc.gov or the Navajo Nation Department of Health website at www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov.

###

MEDIA CONTACTS

Rick Abasta, Communications Director, (928) 530-8197.

Byron C. Shorty, Sr. Public Information Officer, (928) 287-2085.

communications@navajo-nsn.gov