



# THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT  
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

February 1, 2017

The Honorable President Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**RE: Requesting exemption for public safety Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze January 23, 2017**

Dear President Trump:

The Navajo Nation respectfully requests an exemption for the Indian Health Service from the Presidential Memorandum ordering a freeze on hiring of Federal civilian employees. Presidential Memorandum on January 23, 2017 permits the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to “grant exemptions from this freeze where those exemptions are otherwise necessary” as well as the “head of any executive department or agency...[to] exempt from the hiring freeze any positions that it deems necessary to meet the national security or public safety responsibilities.”<sup>i</sup> A White House spokesperson subsequently clarified that the reference to “public safety” in the Memo encompasses “public health.”<sup>ii</sup>

All Americans deserve access to quality health care. The Indian Health Service which is already insufficiently staffed and underfunded runs contrary to the United States legal obligations and trust responsibility to provide quality health care to American Indians and Alaska Natives, and will only exacerbate issues at the I.H.S. that have prevented the delivery of quality health care in some areas.<sup>iii</sup> One of our highest priority is to ensure that essential services are not interrupted to quality health care for the most in need; this hiring freeze has the potential to cost the lives of most venerable Americans.

I appreciate your Memorandum seeks to promote efficient use of existing personnel and funds to improve public services, the hiring freeze imposed across the board, including IHS, will only exacerbate the current chronic understaffed and underfunded health care system and may result drastic morbidity and mortality, which may otherwise be preventable. I emphasize my request between our governments to exempt IHS from the hiring freeze. The Navajo Nation is available to provide additional technical assistance and to work with your administration to serve the American Indian and Alaska Natives.

Respectfully,

THE NAVAJO NATION

Handwritten signature of Russell Begaye in black ink.

Russell Begaye, *President*

Handwritten signature of Jonathan M. Nez in black ink.

Jonathan M. Nez, *Vice President*

<sup>i</sup> “Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze,” White House Office of the Press Secretary, Jan. 23, 2017.

<sup>ii</sup> Lisa Rein, “Federal hiring freeze will be waived for VA jobs with ‘public safety’ missions, agency says,” Washington Post (Washington, DC), Jan. 25, 2017.

<sup>iii</sup> Vinton Hawley, Chairman, NIHB. Jacqueline Pata, Executive Director, NCAI. Correspondence to President Trump, “Requesting an exemption from the Indian Health Service from the Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze, Jan. 31, 2017.