



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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**Nez-Lizer commend the reauthorization of the
Esther Martinez Native American Languages Programs**

WINDOW ROCK – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend the recent passage and enactment of S. 256, the “Esther Martinez Native American Languages Programs Reauthorization Act,” that extends vital language preservation programs for tribes through 2024. The measure was passed by the House on Dec. 9 and signed into law by President Trump on Dec. 20.

“The Navajo language is the foundation of our identity and way of life. As Diné people, it’s vital that we preserve it. My grandparents spoke to me in the Navajo language to pass on their teachings that still guide me to this day. This, in turn, helped us to grow morally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. With these programs extended through 2024, my hope is that future generations will continue to speak the Navajo language,” said President Nez.

The bill is named in honor of Esther Martinez, an Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo traditional storyteller and language advocate who passed away in 2006. It amends existing law to reauthorize two federal Native American language programs at the Administration for Native Americans until 2024, and expands eligibility for those programs to smaller-sized tribal language programs, and allows both programs to offer longer grant periods.

In June, President Nez and Vice President Lizer issued a letter of support for the reauthorization to House and Senate members and requested their support for the passage of the bill that was first introduced by U.S. Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) of New Mexico in the Senate and Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) in the House of Representatives.

“Native languages in the U.S. represent some of the greatest linguistic diversity in the world and embody the cultures, histories, and resiliency of the Native communities that speak them,” said Sen. Udall. “With passage of the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Programs Reauthorization Act, Congress has continued its commitment working with tribes to protect and renew Native languages. This bill is also important for its recognition of Esther Martinez’s legacy of Native languages advocacy in New Mexico and across the country. I’m proud the House joined the Senate to honor Esther Martinez’s work and look forward to this bill becoming law.”

“I applaud Sen. Udall and Rep. Luján for their leadership in introducing the bill in January and much appreciation to President Trump for his approval. It’s meaningful that Congress is taking action to preserve Native Languages by funding Federal grant programs. Many educators and elders value the concept of teaching our children and youth the language and this law will help move their efforts forward to preserve Indigenous languages. Our language is sacred, unique, and powerful. It has won the battles of World War II within the Pacific Theater and moved our great Nation forward,” said Vice President Lizer.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer thank Sen. Udall, Rep. Luján, and many others who supported and advocated for the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Programs Reauthorization Act.

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