



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17, 2019

**Bill to protect Chaco Canyon advances
through the House Natural Resources Committee**



PHOTO: (right to left) Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer, U.S. House Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján, and President Jonathan Nez at the Chaco Culture National Historical Park on April 14, 2019.

WINDOW ROCK — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer thank the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee for passing H.R. 2181: the “Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019” sponsored by Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) and co-

sponsored by Congresswoman Deb Haaland (D-N.M.) on Wednesday. The bill aims to permanently ban oil and gas drilling on federal lands in the greater Chaco Canyon region.

“Thank you to the House Natural Resources Committee, under the leadership of Congressman Raúl Grijalva and Congresswoman Haaland, for supporting the position of the Navajo Nation and helping to preserve this sacred area for our future generations,” stated President Nez.

In June, Assistant Speaker Luján was also able to successfully secure an amendment in the House of Representatives for a one-year ban on oil and gas drilling for the Chaco area, which also requires approval from the Senate.

In meetings with House and Senate members and with the U.S. Department of the Interior, President Nez and Vice President Lizer also shared their concern for potential health impacts on local residents due to oil and gas drilling.

“With today’s action by the House Natural Resources Committee, we remain steadfast in our support for this bill in the entire House and Senate as we seek to secure this important landscape for our Navajo people,” Vice President Lizer stated.

Assistant Speaker Luján expressed his appreciation and stated that he is encouraged by the action of the House Natural Resources Committee.

“Oil and gas drilling in the Greater Chaco region would destroy that beautiful and sacred landscape and would permanently impact New Mexicans’ health and quality of life,” said Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján. “Passing my legislation to protect Chaco through the Natural Resources Committee today creates critical momentum to permanently ban oil and gas drilling. Critically, this legislation also sends a clear message that we will not allow the destruction of sacred lands by companies seeking to prohibit. I will continue to fight to protect this world-renowned site that holds significant cultural value to New Mexicans, Tribal communities, and the Pueblos. I implore the House to pass this bill so future generations may enjoy Chaco Canyon.”

The Nez-Lizer Administration looks forward to advocating for the bill as it moves on to the full House and Senate for consideration.

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.