



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo leaders support New Mexico H.B. 225 to create trust fund for elders

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty commend the New Mexico House Health and Human Services Committee for supporting House Bill 225, which aims to allocate \$25 million to establish the Kiki Saavedra Senior Dignity Fund to support services administered by the New Mexico Department of Aging and Long Term Services for the benefit of elderly people.

The committee supported the measure by a vote of 6 - 0 on Monday, which now moves forward to the House Appropriations and Finance Committee. During Monday's hearing, a letter from President Nez and Vice President Lizer was delivered to the committee requesting the support of the members. The bill is named after the late former State. Rep. Henry "Kiki" Saavedra who passed away from Alzheimer's disease in January 2019.



PHOTO: (left to right) Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, and Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer in Santa Fe, N.M. on Feb. 1, 2019.

"The trust fund for elderly people is greatly needed to better address high priority needs for senior citizens and those with disabilities throughout the state, and particularly on the Navajo Nation where we have many elders who live in remote areas that are in need of more assistance," said President Nez, while recognizing some of the recent successes of the Navajo Department of Aging and Long Term Care Services, including the acquisition of new transportation vans and food delivery vehicles for senior centers and the completion of a master lease for an elderly group home in the community of Birdsprings, Ariz.

"The Nez-Lizer Administration is making positive changes for our elderly Navajo people. Having a state trust fund will create more opportunities for partnerships to provide more services in our communities," added President Nez, who has also recommended that the Nation create an elder

and youth office to combine and coordinate efforts to better bridge the generational teachings for Navajo youth and elders.

In her State of the State Address on Jan. 21, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham spoke in support of establishing the trust fund, which is also included in the Governor's recommended budget to State Legislators.

"We appreciate the Governor's support and the sponsors of the bill for pushing this measure forward to help those who are in great need in the state of New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. President Nez and I will continue to advocate and lobby for the passage of House Bill 225 throughout the legislative session," stated Vice President Lizer.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, a longtime advocate for Navajo elders, also spoke in support of establishing the elderly trust fund. She represents several rural communities as a member of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, including Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'í'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, and Tsé ałnáoz't'í'í.

"The Navajo Nation recognizes that our elders are the foundation of our communities. Our elders' teachings, values, and love contribute to the strengthening of our families and plays a vital role in restoring kinship. Our rural communities require more attention as we face challenges caused by progressive health issues such as Alzheimer's disease that destroys memory and other important mental functions," stated Delegate Crotty.

The Kiki Saavedra Senior Dignity Fund would provide services related to transportation, food benefits, physical and behavioral health, case management and caregiving. The bill also calls for increased access for seniors and adults with disabilities, including veterans, to specialty vehicles and to specialty physical and behavioral health care not always provided in rural areas, assistance with appointments and meals in underserved areas of the state, and care coordination through community health workers.

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