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## News Release

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### **Spring 2019 Navajo Scholarships and Financial Assistance Awards Delayed Due to Federal Shutdown**

The ongoing federal government shutdown is directly impacting Navajo students served by the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship & Financial Assistance (ONNSFA).

Federal dollars, appropriated through a PL 93-638 grant, are the primary source for need-based financial assistance awards to undergraduates served by the ONNSFA. By letter dated Dec. 21, 2018, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Regional Office (BIA NRO) notified the Navajo Nation the CY 2019 Annual Funding Agreement (AFA) covering Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2019 for Higher Education was approved and awarded CR 1 funds of \$2,514,193.

This amount was included in the PL 93-638 contract modification signed by President Russell Begaye on Jan. 8, 2019 and prepared for submission to the BIA NRO so that funds may be drawn down. However, due to the federal government shutdown, the BIA NRO is closed and execution of the AFA is at standstill until the federal government re-opens.

Meanwhile, the ONNSFA is still in the midst of the award cycle for the 2019 Spring/Winter term and federal funds for financial aid are depleted. A total of 9,127 students submitted applications for the 2019 Spring/Winter term. Thus far, a total of about \$5.7 million from several funding sources has been awarded to a total of 1,854 applicants for the 2019 Spring/Winter term.

“We realize the unfortunate predicament the delayed funding places on students,” said Rose Graham, ONNSFA Dept. Manager. “We are working closely with officials within the Navajo Nation, including the Office of Management & Budget and the Office of the Controller, to authorize providing financial assistance to students at least to the extent of \$2.5 million for now and serve additional students as soon as the Congress approves the budget to resume operation of the federal government.”

Ms. Graham cautioned students that it will take another week or so for the Navajo Nation to work through the required process to create a new account to allow the ONNSFA to continue making awards which are subject to another time-consuming process.

Ms. Graham encouraged students to contact the White House and their Congressional Delegation and request an end to the federal shutdown.

“A prolonged shutdown could have a long-term impact for Navajo students and hinder them from continuing their college education,” she said. “In addition to delayed scholarship awards, disruptions to services like those provided by the Internal Revenue Service that provide proof of income could block Pell grants, student loans and other forms of financial aid from reaching students.”

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said, “The delay in providing much needed scholarship funds for our students due to the federal shutdown is a clear violation of the Treaty of 1868. The education of our children is critical to the growth of our Nation. We are demanding Congress and the White House to end the shutdown immediately for the sake of our students and their future.”