



## Navajo Nation Council approves \$41 million hazard pay, PPE, facility safety immediate expenditures

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 23, 2020

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Legislation No. 0132-20, sponsored by 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon (Baahaali, Chilchiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) was approved by the Navajo Nation Council at a special session on Friday, Jun. 19, 2020. The legislation authorized three immediate expenditures totaling \$41 million of federal Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act funding received by the Navajo Nation last month.

“The \$41 million in immediate funding that the Navajo Nation Council voted to approve will give our front line responders and essential workers the compensation they badly deserve,” said Speaker Damon. “It also provides for personal protective equipment and safety assurance for thousands of our Navajo People that are looking to return to a safe workplace.”

The approved legislation now proceeds to Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, who has 10 calendar days to enact the aid package, veto the entire legislation or use a line-item veto to strike individual appropriations once it is delivered.

The approved legislation contains \$21 million in hazard pay to be issued through the Navajo Nation Office of the Controller for front-line responders and essential personnel.

\$10 million was approved for immediate purchases of personal protective equipment (PPE) through the Navajo Nation Department of Health (NNDOH). PPE includes cleaning and disinfecting supplies, face shields, face coverings, disposable gloves and more.

\$10 million was also approved for the Navajo Nation Facilities Maintenance Department to begin disinfecting and ensuring public offices are safe for returning workers and members of the public seeking services.

Under the Navajo Nation Declaration of Public Health Emergency for the coronavirus (COVID-19), the Navajo Nation has been partially closed since Mar. 11. On Mar. 20, \$4 million in funding was approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council for the NNDOH and was enacted by President Nez for COVID-19 emergency funds.

In March, the U.S. Congress approved the federal CARES Act, which appropriated \$8 billion in tribal support funding through the Coronavirus Relief Fund. Of that portion, the Navajo Nation has received over \$700 million as part of the larger amount allocated to federally recognized tribal nations.

Speaker Damon introduced Legislation No. 0132-20 in response to public comments collected by the Legislative Branch since May 6, the date the Navajo Nation began receiving federal CARES Act funds.

Since then, council delegates have taken part in more than 10 Naabik’iyáti’ Committee work sessions with Navajo Nation programs and partners to identify specific project-ready community needs.

Those work sessions yielded many short-, mid- and long-term opportunities to comprehensively address public health crises, like COVID-19.

On May 15, the 24th Navajo Nation Council overwhelmingly approved Resolution No. CMY-44-20, known as the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act, which laid the policy framework for creating and approving expenditure plan(s) for the federal CARES Act funds. Included in that resolution were directives and streamlined procurement policies intended to speed up purchases and payments for COVID-19 response activities.

The Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act was partially line-item vetoed by President Nez on May 30. However, the parts of the resolution that became law set up a process for the Council to approve allocations of federal CARES Act funds through expenditure plans.

Portions of the remaining Navajo Nation CARES Fund will be directed towards mid-term projects being discussed by all three branches of the Navajo Nation government.

Leading up to Friday's special session, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee had Legislation No. 0132-20 under consideration at its Jun. 17 regular meeting and voted to approve the measure with one amendment. On Jun. 18, the Budget and Finance Committee considered the legislation and also approved the package with an additional amendment.

Both committee amendments provided added support and accountability for the Diné Hatááíí (Navajo medicine men) Association. The Council acknowledged the necessity of ensuring the effects of COVID-19 are addressed in a culturally relevant approach by approving the amendments as part of the final vote.

The Naabik'iyáti' Committee also considered the immediate expenditure package with both amendments and approved Legislation No. 0132-20 by a vote of 16 in favor and 0 opposed.

On Friday, the 24th Navajo Nation Council considered Legislation No. 0132-20 and provided final approval of \$41 million in immediate expenditures that directly provide for the Navajo Nation's COVID-19 response. The final vote was 20 in favor and 1 opposed.

Navajo Nation Council legislation can be found online on the Diné Bibeelaz'áanii Binaaltsoos legislative tracking system: [dibb.nnols.org](http://dibb.nnols.org).

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**MEDIA CONTACTS:** [nnlb.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnlb.communications@gmail.com), (928) 287-2085  
Byron C. Shorty, INT Communications Director  
Timothy E. Benally, Public Information Officer  
Isabella S. Robbins, Staff Writer