



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Council Delegates advance a \$1 Billion ARPA spending plan to decentralize Window Rock and to continue empowering Navajo Chapter projects and infrastructure initiatives

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PHOTO: The Naabik'iyáti' Committee of the 24th Navajo Nation Council host a two-day work session to appropriate \$1.07 billion in ARPA funds by amending Legislation No. 0257-21 at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Last week, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee of the 24th Navajo Nation Council advanced a comprehensive spending plan to appropriate \$1.07 billion in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds by amending Legislation No. 0257-21.

Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty proposed an amendment to the legislation to divide \$910.6 million in ARPA funding equally for a total of \$41.4 million per delegate region. This was completed with the intent to decentralize decision-making in Window Rock and to reinforce the local-governance authority of chapter governments.

“The Executive Branch proposed an imbalance project list in which many of our ARPA eligible water, broadband, and electric projects were not included. Council passed the amendment to Legislation No. 0257-21 as an equitable distribution to the 24 Legislative Districts and directed the Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Fund to provide us direct technical assistance,” said Madam Chair Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé'áłnáoozt'í'í, Sheep Springs, Beclabito, Gad'ii'áhi/Tó Ko'í).

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After reaching a consensus, Vice Chairman Carl Slater offered a modification to the amendment to provide \$27 million for the Judicial Branch and over \$132 million for Navajo public safety, rural addressing, enhanced 911 services, government cybersecurity, small businesses through the Dineh Chamber of Commerce, and the ongoing COVID-19 public health response by the Navajo Department of Health.

This approved modification allocates between \$31 to \$41 million to each delegate region in addition to the nationwide programs. Because of the Defunded CARES and reimbursements to the UUFB and Sihasin Funds, the amount for the 24 legislative districts is different. Delegates will draft Justice Department-approved expenditure plans to allocate their communities' share, and all projects will have to be approved through Council resolution and approved by the President.

"My colleagues and I dug deep into the bill, offered numerous alternatives and compromises, and submitted the best plan to balance national and local Diné priorities. The modification offers funding equity among all regions and parity between local priorities and nationwide efforts to recover our people's health from the pandemic's harm. I'm proud the Council is standing up to fund transitional housing for mental health and substance abuse treatment centers, community wellness, E911 rural addressing, and support for Navajo business owners. This legislation finally has vision and purpose," said Vice Chairman Carl Slater (Round Rock, Rock Point, Tséch'izí, Lukachukai, Tsaille-Wheatfields).

Last July, the Navajo Nation Council allocated close to \$200 million for ARPA project planning and management, broadband planning and management, ROW and compliance support, and administrative financial support through the Fiscal Recovery Fund Office (NNFRF). The money remains in Window Rock and the Council and the federal government have yet to see the streamlining and support functions once envisioned become operational.

"President Jonathan Nez needs to be honest with the Navajo people and not say this is discretionary funding. ARPA money is federal funds that need to follow federal guidelines. Our chapter officials, staff, and community leaders are competent, know what they want, and worked hard on submitting their projects to the Division of Community Development. We believe our local leaders at the chapters know best what their needs are - Dine bohołniih," said Council Delegate Elmer P. Begay (Dilcon, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone, Greasewood Springs).

The Executive Branch must focus on improving the internal red-tape to expedite payments like the \$100 million in approved project funding still waiting for approval by the Nez-Lizer Administration.

"The amendment was passed by a majority of the Naabik'iyati Committee that directly invests ARPA funding into our 110 chapters. Hardship at the chapter level should not be dictated by Window Rock or President Jonathan Nez. The hardship of the Navajo people is being experienced in our communities, and this amendment gives control and decision-making power back to the Navajo people at the local level," said Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizi).

Last year, the Navajo Nation received approximately \$2.1 billion in ARPA funds from the Biden Administration to respond to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Navajo Nation Council believes every community should benefit from the COVID-19 relief funding and not just a select few.

“Our in-depth review of this legislation showed that Eastern Agency chapters would get less than the four other agencies of the Navajo Nation. Honorable Amber Kanazbah Crotty’s assertion that there be equity among all chapters for APRA funding was paramount to our endorsement of the modified amendment requested by Honorable Carl Slater. President Nez is misleading public opinion by controlling what and which local chapter infrastructure projects go forward. That for me is not in the best interest of the people and the rebuilding of our great Navajo Nation,” said Chairman Daniel Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor).

Last summer, the Division of Community Development (DCD) requested each chapter to propose three projects that are ‘shovel-ready’. The communities of Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, and Low Mountain proposed over \$119 million in projects for consideration that were not approved by President Nez. Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. shared that the Executive Branch wants over \$660 million to be used by the central office in Window Rock for Nez-Lizer-approved projects.

“We need to work together to accommodate the urgent needs of our Navajo people, starting at the hogan-level and upward. In order for this process to be fair and transparent, the President needs to attend our work sessions and understand our position from the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee. I have complete faith in the leadership of our chapter officials, staff, and the many elders who attend our meetings. Now is the time for the Nez-Lizer Administration to compromise,” said Council Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kinłichii, Steamboat).

Earlier today, during an ARPA funding update with Northern Agency chapters, DCD Director, Dr. Pearl Yellowman, and NNFRF Director, Tom Platero, presented an overview of the chapter project listing and review process. It was stated that no staff has been hired yet to fulfill the capacity needed to begin the immediate construction of water, electric, and broadband projects. The President and Vice President should be concerned about this and their lack of transparency to share project listing details with Navajo leadership.

“The Navajo Nation Council is the governing body of the Navajo Nation and the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee is empowered under Title 2 of the tribal code with the authority to decide how chapters are supported. We urge President Jonathan Nez to work with us and not misguide the process that will lead to further division. The majority of the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee has spoken for the Navajo people. K’é and Hozhó will continue to be the catalyst for how the Council appropriates ARPA funding during this pandemic,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

On Monday, the Navajo Nation Council will convene in a special session to approve Legislation No. 0257-21 at the Council Chambers. President Jonathan Nez will then have 10 days to approve or veto the bill to immediately assist the Navajo people.

Legislation No. 0257-21 can be viewed at <http://dibb.nnols.org/publicreporting.aspx>. Public comments may be submitted by email to the Office of Legislative Services at comments@navajonnsn.gov

Proposed Allocation for 24 Delegate Regions passed by the Naabik'íyáti' Committee:

Eugenia Charles-Newton	\$41,027,581
Eugene Tso	\$40,390,641
Charlaine Tso	\$40,429,253
Mark Freeland	\$38,340,981
Edison Wauneka	\$40,560,442
Pernell Halona	\$38,259,857
Rickie Nez	\$39,675,320
Elmer Begay	\$33,636,861
Herman Daniels, Jr.	\$34,671,252
Thomas Walker, Jr.	\$31,356,309
Nathaniel Brown	\$35,783,393
Vince James	\$39,588,991
Paul Begay	\$38,664,160
Otto Tso	\$40,390,428
Amber Kanazbah Crotty	\$38,988,380
Kee Allen Begay, Jr.	\$37,843,213
Carl Slater	\$37,501,188
Wilson Stewart, Jr.	\$40,305,055
Raymond Smith, Jr.	\$39,393,122
Daniel Tso	\$34,703,590
Jimmy Yellowhair	\$39,343,133
Seth Damon	\$36,188,072
Edmund Yazzie	\$37,236,961
Jamie Henio	\$36,368,658

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