



The Navajo Nation Office of the Controller

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CONTACT:
Pearline Kirk, *Controller*
info@nnooc.org
www.nnooc.org

Navajo Nation enrolled population increases to 399,494 thanks to Navajo CARES Act Hardship Assistance Program

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation Office of the Controller reports the Navajo CARES Act Hardship Assistance Program has drastically helped to increase the total enrolled population of the Navajo Nation from 306,268 to 399,494 Navajo Nation members and possibly making the Navajo Nation the largest federally recognized tribe in the U.S.

Pearline Kirk, controller of the Navajo Nation, explained the drastic increase is largely due to the Hardship Assistance Program which paid more than \$322 million to more than 293,000 Navajo applicants from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding.

“This increase in enrollment is very significant, it is a direct product to the Navajo people’s vested interest in participation in the Hardship Assistance Program which contained a mandatory enrollment requirement for eligibility, prompting many people to update their enrollment records to be considered eligible,” said Kirk. “The Office of the Controller was responsible for administration of the Hardship Assistance Program.”

“It became apparent to our office early in the process of program administration that the enrollment information maintained electronically by the Navajo Nation Office of Vital Records and Identification was incomplete,” added Kirk. “During the course of the Hardship Assistance Program, we received a large number of applicants that submitted valid enrollment documents, such as a copy of their Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) which we were unable to locate within the electronic database.”

Through strategic planning and careful coordination, the Office of the Controller collected thousands of verifiable documents which in turn served as information used to verify enrollment of applicants that were not previously contained in the outdated database.

Kirk explained they continue to receive valid CIB documents from both applicants and individuals that missed the initial deadline for the Hardship Assistance Program, and these documents are being registered in the current database.

“Today, the Navajo Nation’s vital records database has never been more accurate,” said Kirk. “The efforts of the Office of the Controller resulted in the construction of a database that can now verify enrollment with accuracy and more reliability.”

Kirk said this process provided a great deal of incentive for Navajo individuals to ensure their records were updated and accurate.

“The Hardship Assistance Program also allowed for a direct validation of more than 300,000 records, as well as the collection and digitization of records that were previously contained in decentralized repositories at satellite agency enrollment offices across the Navajo Nation,” Kirk said.

Kirk also said the impacts to the Navajo Nation are great.

“The American Rescue Plan Act formula is presumed to include a significant portion of the distribution based on self-certified enrollment,” said Kirk. “This will make a huge difference in funding. Additionally, several other federal programs are also funded using certified enrollment.”

“Thank you to our Navajo people for helping to make this population increase possible,” added Kirk. “Thank you also to my staff at the Office of the Controller and our consultants for helping to make this happen. Our staff worked long hours, they often spent time away from home and their families to ensure programs continue to benefit the Navajo people.”

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