



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo Nation strongly opposes CARES Act funding for Alaska Native Corporations

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer strongly oppose the federal government’s decision to make for-profit Alaska Native Corporations eligible for funding that is specifically allocated for federally-recognized tribes, including the Navajo Nation, from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to help response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Navajo Nation is the largest tribe in Indian Country that has been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 outbreak. We have close to one thousand positive cases and we have lost 38 precious lives so far. We, along with other federally-recognized tribes, aggressively advocated for tribal funding to be included in the CARES Act and now we must continue fighting to keep what was allocated for us. Alaska Native Corporations are for-profit entities that have billions of dollars in revenue, and can access other funding sources in the CARES Act. The Congressional intent of these funds were to relieve tribal governments. We need provide relief for our tribal communities, not shareholders. We demand answers from the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Treasury on how they are upholding their trust responsibility to federally-recognized tribes by considering this action. The \$8 billion tribal set-aside should provide much-needed relief to tribes, not for-profit corporations. These for-profit corporations will take away resources from tribes,” said President Nez.

This week, Abbott Rapid Analyzer testing kits became available on the Navajo Nation, however, President Nez and Vice President Lizer said more testing is needed to identify those who have the virus so they can be isolated and prevent further spread of the virus. In hospitals on the Navajo Nation, testing has only been made available to those showing severe symptoms and the elderly due to the shortage of testing supplies.

“Our Nation is slowly seeing the benefits of the three COVID-19 bills passed by Congress, but it is not arriving fast enough. We need more rapid testing, health care personnel, PPE’s, ventilators, and other essential services to adequately address the expected increase of COVID-19 cases on the Navajo Nation. Funds need to be prioritized for federally-recognized tribes, not corporations,” stated Vice President Lizer.

As of Wednesday, there is a total of 921 positive COVID-19 cases and 38 deaths for the Navajo Nation. Navajo Area Indian Health Service has indicated that they anticipate the number of COVID-19 cases to peak in mid-May.

“We are praying for the best, and preparing for the worst. If the projections are accurate, we have a long way to go in terms of providing health care treatment, hospital beds, ventilators, and much more. We are not sitting back waiting for the federal government, we are stepping up with our own funds and resources, and with partnerships with outside entities, to provide for our Navajo people and communities. We strongly urge the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Treasury to re-evaluate their position and do what is right for all tribes,” added President Nez.

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