



The Navajo Nation  
Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director  
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer  
(928) 274-2758

[nnopvp.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnopvp.communications@gmail.com)

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 30, 2020

**Navajo Nation thanks Congressional members for  
supporting CARES Act funding for federally-recognized tribes**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer extend their appreciation to all of the Congressional members who have voiced their support for the Navajo Nation and other federally-recognized tribes by calling on the U.S. Department of the Treasury to immediately release \$8 billion in CARES Act funding to tribes.

The Navajo Nation was part of a lawsuit filed against the U.S. Department of the Treasury last week, requesting \$8 billion in CARES Act funding allocated to help tribes fight COVID-19, to be immediately disbursed to the federally-recognized tribes and not to for-profit Alaska Native Corporations that generate billions of dollars in revenue. As of Wednesday, the Navajo Nation had 1,977 positive cases and 62 deaths related to COVID-19.

“We, as the First Americans, are once again having to fight for what is rightfully ours and what the U.S. District Court has ruled is ours. It’s very disappointing that it had to reach the point of entering federal court, but we are very grateful to have the support of many congressional members who are fighting alongside us and calling on the Department of the Treasury to release the CARES Act dollars immediately. We are in a fight to save lives throughout Indian Country,” said President Nez.

Alaska Native Corporations are for-profit corporations organized under state law and are owned by shareholders, including non-Indian shareholders. The 12 regional Alaska Native Corporations alone have over 138,000 shareholders, employ more than 43,000 people worldwide, and generated more than \$10.5 billion in revenues in 2018.

“The Congressional intent of these funds is to relieve federally-recognized tribal governments and most importantly, their people. Congress intended these funds to go to federally-recognized tribes and now we have a federal agency undermining the vote of Congress and tribes. We are truly thankful to all of the support we are receiving from our Congressional delegation,” said Vice President Lizer.

The following members of Congress issued statements in support of the Navajo Nation:

**U.S. Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.), Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs:** “The Navajo Nation is on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic but, even in the face of great loss

and challenge, the Diné People and the Navajo Tribal leaders have shown great resilience and strength. I am doing my part to stand with the Navajo Nation by fighting hard in Congress to send the health care, economic recovery, and infrastructure resources needed to support the vital work Navajo communities are doing. But this funding is only useful when it actually gets on the ground. My staff and I are following the administration's distribution of CARES Act funding across Indian Country, urging swift and effective distribution that respects Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. The fight is not over. The needs of the Navajo Nation's and all Native communities remain great. I will continue to fight in Congress so all of Indian Country has the resources to face down this pandemic and protect their communities."

**U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.):** "The disproportionate toll that the coronavirus pandemic has taken on chapters across the Navajo Nation is truly heartbreaking. Tribal governments like the Navajo Nation are taking on enormous and unprecedented costs to protect the health and safety of their communities. They need the full support of the federal government as they confront this deadly crisis. That's why I fought so hard to include this urgently needed funding in the CARES Act. This is just the start. I am fully committed to doing everything in my power to secure the federal funding and resources the Navajo Nation needs to support an effective, lifesaving public health response and rebuild thriving communities when this is over."

**U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M), Assistant Speaker:** "The Navajo Nation is on the frontlines fighting this pandemic every day. It's critical that the federal government provide the necessary resources to the Navajo Nation to protect its citizens. In the CARES Act that was signed into law, I was proud to support \$8 billion in funding through the Coronavirus Relief Fund for Tribal governments. This week, I am urging the administration to begin releasing these funds immediately to Tribal governments, including the Navajo Nation. I will also continue to fight for additional funding for Tribal governments in the next legislative package. I'm thankful for the leadership of President Nez, Vice President Lizer, and Speaker Damon, and I will continue working alongside and in solidarity with the Navajo Nation to address this crisis."

**U.S. Rep. Tom O'Halleran:** "The Navajo Nation has already waited too long and endured far too much without the funding they were promised under the CARES Act a month ago. I am calling on the Treasury to immediately disperse the \$8 billion in allocated funding to Tribes so that sovereign Tribal governments—not corporations like ANC—can address this public health emergency that continues to grow and worsen. The federal government has a trust responsibility to federally recognized tribal nations in the United States, and I will continue to hold these federal agencies accountable to Indian Country."

**U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland (D-N.M.), Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus:** "No community should be without the tools and resources to manage this pandemic, but a failure of the federal government to live up to its trust responsibility has left Native American communities without the basic necessities to manage this public health crisis. That's why we fought so hard to get \$8 billion set aside for sovereign tribal governments in the CARES Act. Navajo Nation leadership has been taking steps to stop the spread and are relying on these funds to provide basic health care, public safety, infrastructure, and education needs. By delaying the release of these funds, the Administration is putting Native Americans' lives at risk and continuing a cycle of failure to meet its trust responsibility."

**U.S. Rep. Greg Stanton (D-Ariz.):** "The Navajo Nation is on the front lines fighting this pandemic, and I'm proud that we made it a priority to deliver much-needed funds through the CARES Act," said Rep. Greg Stanton. "The federal government has a trust responsibility to respond to the health care of Native peoples, and in Congress, we're continuing to fight for more tribal resources. Now we have more work to do to get additional much-needed resources to the Navajo Nation, and to get them there fast."

**U.S. Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.), Chairman of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the U.S.:** "Tribal and Alaska Native governments have already waited too long to receive the \$8 billion in relief we passed for them a month ago in the CARES Act. Tribes are on the front lines of this pandemic, especially on the Navajo Nation, where the outbreak is one of the worst in the country per capita. This administration needs to stop wasting time trying to divert this aid to nongovernmental entities and immediately begin distributing it to recognized Tribal governments."

**U.S. Rep. Raúl Grijalva, Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources:** "Tribal governments are working around the clock to protect their communities from the coronavirus pandemic, and they need the resources that Democrats secured in the Coronavirus Relief Fund. The federal government's coronavirus response is a matter of life and death in Indian Country, and the Trump administration is failing. As Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, I will continue doing everything I can so that Indian Country has what it needs to adequately fund tribal governments and stop the spread of coronavirus. It's time for the Trump administration to do the same - and that starts with releasing Coronavirus Relief Fund funds immediately."

**U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, Chairwoman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies:** "Congress had to fight the White House to get these funds for tribal governments included in the CARES Act to begin with, and now we are fighting to get them distributed as required by law. Tribal nations deserve better from the federal government."

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.