



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2020

U.S. District Court rules in favor of tribes for CARES Act funding

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend Monday's ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Amit P. Mehta, which supports the Navajo Nation's position that \$8 billion that was included in the CARES Act to help fight COVID-19, is allocated for federally-recognized tribes only and not for-profit Alaska Native Corporations that generate billions of dollars in revenue. As of April 26, the Navajo Nation had 1,716 positive cases and 59 deaths related to COVID-19.

"Federally-recognized tribes stood together to oppose the actions of the Department of the Treasury in another attempt to undermine the first citizens of this country, but our voices were heard and Indigenous people prevailed today! I'm sure there will be other attempts to direct these funds away from tribes, but we need to remain strong in our position and continue to ask our congressional delegation to continue fighting alongside us for our fair share of CARES Act funding," said President Nez.

On April 22, the Navajo Nation joined 10 other tribes in the lawsuit against the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, regarding federal COVID-19 funding. Congress allocated \$8 billion to help tribal governments fight the COVID-19 pandemic under the Coronavirus Relief Fund. However, the Secretary of the Treasury attempted to fund over 230 Alaska Native Corporations using the funds.

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. We thank Judge Mehta for doing what was right for our Navajo people and tribes across the country and we also owe a debt of gratitude to Navajo Nation Assistant Attorney General Paul Spruhan, the Rothstein Donatelli law firm, and of course Attorney General Doreen McPaul for fighting for us in court. The ruling does not fully address everything we had asked for, but we continue to urge the Department of the Treasury to release all funds for federally-recognized-tribes immediately," said Vice President Lizer.

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