



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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President approves \$475 million in CARES Act funding to provide immediate COVID-19 relief funding for water projects, power line projects, and more



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer approved over \$475 million in CARES Act funding for water line projects, power line projects, solar power projects, internet access to remote areas, business assistance, and more resources to help the Navajo people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Nez-Lizer Administration approved the following funds in Resolution CJY-67-20:

- \$130 million for the Navajo Department of Water Resources for water projects, including waterline and cistern projects, water hauling, windmill repairs, water well infrastructure, earthen dams, and irrigation projects, which ensures that the Navajo people have access to adequate and safe water to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

- \$44.2 million for powerline projects, including power line capital projects and electrical line extensions, to ensure that Navajo homes and facilities have access to electricity sufficient to comply with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 guidelines.
- \$53.2 million for telecommunication and broadband expansion projects for schools, higher educational institutions, and public facilities, to ensure Navajo students, educators, and employees have adequate broadband access and telecommunication capacity while complying with "Safe at Home" public health orders and can communicate with public safety, healthcare, and education.
- \$35.1 million for solar projects for Navajo homes within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation to ensure that they have access to electricity to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- \$1,000 for hardship assistance to help Navajo individuals and families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nez-Lizer Administration will also propose another expenditure plan to provide more hardship assistance for Navajo families and individuals that have experienced financial burdens created by the pandemic.
- \$828,637 for parks and recreation, including vendors and others, who experienced negative economic impacts from the pandemic.
- \$42.1 million for payroll support pay expenses eligible under the U.S. Treasury guidance.
- \$24.6 million for Navajo Gaming Enterprise, who employ over 1,100 Navajo citizens, to avoid lay-offs, loss of healthcare insurance, and to sustain business operations.
- \$9.6 million for the Judicial Branch to continue court services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- \$60 million for Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development to provide recovery and assistance for Navajo businesses and entrepreneurs, who were impacted by the public health emergency.
- \$75.8 million for Navajo Department of Health to continue to provide COVID-19 related health care services, such as vaccinations, testing, alternative care services, traditional and faith based services, and others, for the Navajo people.

"In the review of the funds provided in CJY-67-20, we considered the purposes of the projects, the timeframe to complete each project, the readiness of the projects, and all the requirements necessary to carry out successful projects. Most importantly, the allocations have to comply with the federal CARES Act law and have to be expended by December 30, 2020, as required by the U.S. Treasury. The Administration had to prioritize projects and services that reflect the immediate and essential needs of our Navajo people to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Through the teachings of K'é (kinship), Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahat'á (planning), Iiná (life), and Sihasin (stability of restoration of balance and harmony through reflection), we can help

each other to overcome any obstacle to restore Hozhó, balance, and harmony," said President Nez.

With the input from many experts in the field and discussions of how to refine the plan, several portions were reduced, such as the following:

- The Broadband-Telecommunications Projects were decreased by \$15,000,000 for non-tribal owned Eligible Telecommunications Carriers. The Navajo Department of Information Technology could move immediately with a preferred carrier recommended by Navajo leadership instead of an open-ended selection process.
- The Solar Projects were reduced by \$34,103,910 appropriated to the Native Renewables company. We believe a project focused on the efforts of Native Renewables working with families in the Former Bennett Freeze Area will fit the objective of bringing power to those who are in need and meeting the timeline for spending. There will be a new proposal for the initiative.
- Striking \$23,973,000 for solid waste projects across the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Environmental Protection Agency is a regulatory agency for the Navajo Nation, and the Agency is not in the best position to carry out the solid waste projects. The funds are best delivered to the Navajo Division of Community Development, working with Navajo Chapters or regional sanitation facilities. Redirecting the funds to the Navajo Division of Community Development, working with Chapters, will meet this objective.
- Striking \$48,803,592 for payroll expenditures for the period after July 1, 2020, this includes the 4th Quarter of the Fiscal Year 2020, and from October 1 to December 30, 2020, this consists of the 1st Quarter of the Fiscal Year 2021. The Nation may consider other sources of funds for payroll for this time period while making more funds available for direct services to the Navajo People. The General Fund payroll expenditures and 638 funded business units incurred through June 30, 2020, remain in place.
- Striking \$33,423,914 for housing and housing improvement projects. The housing project gave \$1,392,663.08 to each Council Delegate district, but there are not enough funds in some Chapters to complete one house. There is doubt about completing housing projects by December 30, 2020. Therefore, a refinement on the housing funding will be undertaken and made equitable.
- Striking \$20,008,798 to address additional Administration and compliance of CARES Act funds. The Navajo Nation's overall financial system includes other Departments who work together to process financial documents, set up federal budgets, and work with Divisions, Departments, Chapters, and contractors for requisitions and payments. We can provide an appropriation across the financial network, so our system is adequately funded for the proper personnel, contractors, and office equipment. We recommend a provision to

include the Office of the Controller, the Office of Management and Budget, and other departments of the financial system.

"The approval is a big win for the Nation. Our focus has to remain on those who need the funding the most, including our Navajo families, elders, and vulnerable individuals. Our goal is to have all the approved projects and direct services to be completed by the end of the year to help those in need. Some appropriations were reduced or stricken due to the need for further analysis and discussion. We look forward to leadership coming together to revisit these items and refine the funding proposals that will directly assist the Navajo people," added President Nez, "We commend the 24th Navajo Nation Council for their long hours of dedication, discussions, and hard work to move the legislation through the process."

The total approved funding of \$476,666,192 represents approximately 72% approval of appropriated amounts. The remaining amount of \$175,313,214, along with the previous balance of \$1,150,000.37 of the CARES Fund, provides \$176,463,214.37 to create a second phase appropriation that will provide direct relief services to our People.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer stated that the second phase appropriation proposed plan would focus on immediate financial relief for Navajo individuals, families, and communities impacted by the pandemic. The proposal will include college student relief, hardship assistance for students, emergency assistance for Navajo members, elders and vulnerable individuals, propane and natural gas services for elders, immediate internet connectivity for families, additional solar projects, housing initiatives, and many more.

"As we visited all 110 communities within the Navajo Nation, we heard the challenges and pleas of our Navajo people. The coronavirus has emotionally, physically, spiritually, and financially impacted many families. Therefore, we continue to develop plans that will directly help our people. The Administration pledges our commitment to work with the Navajo Nation Council to quickly work on the second phase of CARES Act projects and getting more relief to our people," said Vice President Lizer.

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