



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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**Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act
included in omnibus spending bill passed by Congress**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Following approval by the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate expedited their vote and passage of an omnibus appropriations package that includes \$1.4 trillion for federal spending and \$900 billion for COVID-19 relief. The historic measure also includes the approval of the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act. Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer now request the support of President Trump to provide water resources for Navajo people in the state of Utah.

The Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act will:

- Settle all current and future claims by the Navajo Nation for water rights within Utah;
- Ratify the proposed water rights settlement between the Navajo Nation and the State of Utah, confirming the Navajo Nation's right to deplete 81,500 acre-feet of water per year from Utah's Colorado River Basin apportionment; and
- Authorize approximately \$220 million for water infrastructure to provide water infrastructure, which will provide clean drinking water, to Navajo communities in Utah.

"This is a historic milestone for the Navajo people and our past and present leaders. This water settlement is one that was negotiated for many years and finally put before Congress for a vote on this day. There were many challenges that had to be overcome and today, we can celebrate this achievement together. I am very thankful to all members of the House and Senate who voted in support of the water settlement as well as our federal partners, Navajo Nation Council, local chapter officials, the state of Utah, the law firm of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, and supporters. We accomplished this together," said President Nez.

President Nez testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife in June 2019, and called upon lawmakers to pass the settlement legislation immediately. President Nez and Vice President Lizer have met with congressional members on many occasions to request their support as well. The Water Rights Settlement is also supported through a resolution passed by the Navajo Nation Council.

More than 40-percent of Navajo households in Utah lack running water or adequate sanitation. In some cases, such as in the community of Oljato on the Arizona-Utah border, a single spigot on a desolate road, miles from any residence, serves 900 people.

“All of the countless hours spent negotiating, lobbying, and pushing this historic water settlement over the years by so many leaders has finally paid off. Through the combined efforts of many advocates and leaders over the years, we are confident that our Navajo people in the state of Utah will receive the clean water resources they deserve. We truly appreciate all of the support from the House and Senate. I am confident that President Trump will sign the water settlement into law,” Vice President Lizer stated.

The spending package also includes the following provisions for tribes:

- An additional \$5 million for Tribal Epidemiology Centers to help respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
- \$13 million for Esther Martinez Native American Language programs to fund community-based language revitalization efforts
- \$21 million for Early Childhood and Family Development programs under the Bureau of Indian Education
- A study of Bureau of Indian Education teacher and counselor pay to ensure compensation keeps pace with Department of Defense pay, as required by law, and to prevent resources from being diverted from other priorities that could impact students’ education;
- More than \$5 million for the Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions program, which makes grants to colleges and universities that enroll at least 10 percent Native American students
- Additional funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act enforcement
- Funding to maintain school bus routes

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