



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## President Nez approves the Navajo Nation's FY 2021 Comprehensive Budget

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez signed Resolution CN-88-20, approving the Navajo Nation's FY2021 Comprehensive Budget to fund governmental offices and programs, many of which provide direct services to members of the Navajo Nation including elderly, youth, disabled, and many others. President Nez also exercised the line-item veto authority to reduce spending due to uncertain circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipated revenue reductions in the coming months and years.

President Nez also called for the three branches of government to work together to reallocate Personnel Lapse Fund savings from the previous fiscal year totaling over \$9.2 million, with proper planning and implementation based on realistic timelines. All three branches were subject to the line item vetoes. All of the non-recurring funds approved by the Council from the Personnel Lapse Fund would have been a one-time appropriation until the end of September 2021.

"At the very start of the budget process, the three branch chiefs met and signed a document that called for the executive, legislative, and judicial branches to work together to recommend the use of the Personnel Lapse Fund savings. We need to honor that signed agreement and use some of the funds to help our Navajo people, but also to set some aside for future needs especially when we are trying to handle the COVID-19 pandemic and to save lives. To all of the members of the Navajo Nation Council, we all have good intentions and we all want to help our people. We may not all agree on how that should be done, but we should always be respectful to one another and talk these matters out just like our leaders long ago did. We have to remember that we are in this fight against COVID-19 together," said President Nez.

President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer approved funding for senior centers and elderly assistance programs that was requested in the original legislation. The Nez-Lizer Administration also fully supports the concept of establishing a Child Advocacy Center, but there needs to be more thorough planning and discussions between the branches of government to ensure it is effective and truly benefits the youth, which was explained in a memorandum to all Council members. The memorandum and other budget documents can be found online at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YzA0sOTCsjUwBCaekbcMdo1Vd2TyQLWj?usp=sharing>

"We fully support the idea of creating a centralized Child Advocacy Center to oversee the existing programs that are tasked with providing services to our young people, but we should have thoughtful discussions and careful planning before we commit funding for it," said President Nez.

President Nez also line item vetoed a Condition of Appropriation that called for a Missing Persons Unit to be established by the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety by Dec. 31, 2020, a task that is already in progress under Executive Director Jesse Delmar.

“The foundation of creating a Missing Persons Unit is established and is certainly needed. Our staff is working to have it fully implemented and we have momentum to carry it through. Our goal is to account for all of our people who are missing and to have them documented in the national law enforcement data system,” stated Executive Director Delmar.

In regards to line item vetoing funds for Judicial Branch courts, which were also part of the \$9.2 million in Personnel Lapse Fund savings, President Nez noted that the Navajo Nation Department of Justice recently won a lawsuit against the federal government that awarded the Judicial Branch \$15 million that can be used to help the courts once the Council introduces and approves legislation to appropriate those funds.

“The Council and our administration want to help our people through the budget and a lot of what is being proposed is in progress. Regarding the \$9.2 million in personnel savings, we are asking all leaders to honor the three branch agreement that was signed at the start of the budget process and called for the three branches to work together to allocate those funds, but we have to consider saving some to meet the unexpected needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and revenue shortfalls. Let’s move forward on these budget matters and let’s do so respectfully,” added President Nez.

During a Northern Agency Council meeting held on Saturday, officials also requested clarification regarding the line item veto of nearly \$441,000 for chapter official stipends that was subject to line item vetoes. President Nez said the Division of Community Development included the funds for stipends in the division’s unmet needs budget, which will be further discussed with the Council and put forth through legislation that addresses the unmet needs of all branches of government.

“The FY2021 budget includes over \$1.2 billion that is inclusive of General Funds and federal funding. The Comprehensive Budget also included a \$3.1 million set-aside for the Veterans Housing Program and requires \$20 million from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance to be reserved for the FY2022 Comprehensive Budget to help address potential shortfalls. We look forward to working with the Council to address other needs,” said Vice President Lizer.

Also included in the Comprehensive Budget are the required set-asides such as \$19 million for the Permanent Trust Fund, \$6.3 million for the Veterans Trust Fund, \$3.1 million for the Land Acquisition Fund, \$2 million for capital outlay matching funds, \$2 million for the Water Rights Claim Fund, and \$12.4 million for the Diné Higher Education Grant Fund.

The memorandum addressed to the Council and other budget documents can be found online at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YzA0sOTCsjUwBCaekbcMdo1Vd2TyQLWj?usp=sharing>

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