



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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U.S. House passes the historic Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend the approval by the U.S. House of Representatives of the historic Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act, a bill that the two leaders have advocated strongly for to secure funding and water resources for Navajo families in the state of Utah. The settlement act was part of the \$1.4 trillion omnibus spending measure approved by the House on Monday. The U.S. Senate is expected to vote on the legislation in the coming days.

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 truly a historic milestone for the Navajo people and the state of Utah. For years, Navajo leaders have advocated for the passage of the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act to provide clean water for our people that reside in the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation. The COVID-19 pandemic has punctuated our critical need for more clean water resources to keep our people safe and healthy. I am very thankful to all members of Congress who supported our 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 – past and present leaders,” said President Nez.

“I want to specially thank Representative Rob Bishop and Senator Mitt Romney for being the prime sponsors of the bill, and express my appreciation to the House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raúl Grijalva, Representative Ben McAdams, and House and Senate leadership for the critical role they played. I would also like to thank Governor Gary Herbert and Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox from the State of Utah for their steadfast support of the Navajo Nation and the settlement legislation,” he added.

In June 2019, President Nez testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife and called upon lawmakers to pass the settlement legislation immediately. Since 2019, President Nez met with congressional members to request their continued support. 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.

“The passage of this landmark settlement between the Navajo Nation, the United States, and the State of Utah will provide long-term water resources for many of our Navajo people. The settlement also advances the commitments in the Treaty of 1868, where Navajo leaders pledged to keep peace with the United States and in return, the United States promised the Navajo People a permanent homeland. We commend the House for their support and we will continue to advocate for the Senate’s approval as well. I respectfully request the support of President Trump to finalize this historic settlement by signing it into law when it reaches his desk,” Vice President Lizer stated.

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