



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

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### **Unspent CARES Act funds are in the process of being diverted to the Hardship Assistance fund to be used for direct relief for the Navajo people**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Wednesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez once again affirmed his support for CARES Act Hardship Assistance funds to be used for direct relief for the Navajo people. The Office of the Controller has consistently stated that the process of distributing the funds will begin in early December.

“First and foremost, I support hardship assistance funds for the Navajo people. My signature is on the resolution that approved those hardship funds and to allow other CARES Act funds to be diverted to that pot of money. When we first received the CARES Act dollars, our administration put forth legislation to provide direct relief by way of financial assistance for students, elders, disabled, and others, but that legislation was amended by the Council and those funds were removed – that’s a simple fact. We want to help as many of our people as possible by maximizing the use of the CARES Act dollars,” said President Nez.

He further stated, “the CARES Act resolutions that were passed by the Council and signed into law also included funds for water, power line, telecommunications and other projects that are bringing long-term benefits – these projects are getting done as quickly as possible. So far, thousands of our people have received electricity, water systems, bathroom additions, increased telecommunications access, and much more. We are trying to work through the internal processes to help as many people as possible through these types of projects and through the hardship assistance funds.”

The previous CARES Act resolutions approved include a provision that requires unspent funds to be diverted to the Hardship Assistance program, which is currently in the process. In regards to a memorandum issued on Nov. 20 that has since been circulated amongst the public, President Nez said the Navajo Nation has to show documentation and accountability for every dollar of the CARES Act funds that is spent. He added that the memorandum outlines the process and procedure to move unspent CARES Act dollars to the Hardship Assistance fund.

“The memo guides our divisions and programs to reconcile what funds are spent or obligated, what is pending, and to help determine an exact amount of unspent funds so that we know

exactly how much will be available for direct relief to the people. This is being compiled into a Navajo Nation CARES Act projects close-out report that will be shared with the Council and the public. The fact is that all elected leaders are receiving calls and questions from the people, the enterprises, frontline workers, and many others who have done great work during this pandemic.

In order to process forthcoming invoices by individuals and vendors, President Nez said executed documents such as service contracts must be processed by the Office of the Controller to avoid potential legal issues.

“I signed off on many contracts prior to and the day of the November 20<sup>th</sup> deadline, but they were never placed into the system by the Office of the Controller for payment. Now we are working through the internal processes to avoid any liabilities due to the contracts that obligated funds. This is the first time that the Navajo Nation has received this large amount of funds at one time, so there are setbacks and issues that need to be resolved,” said President Nez.

“In the end, we have to remember that we are in this fight against COVID-19 together. As elected leaders, we should not be creating division among the Navajo people. Instead, we need to communicate with each other directly and resolve the issues and get these funds expended for all of our people. The sharing of misinformation must end now. I am praying for all of our people and our leaders because the only way we prosper is when we work together,” President Nez stated.

The Nez-Lizer Administration will hold a town hall on Thursday, Dec. 3 at 6:00 p.m. (MST) to provide more updates.

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