



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

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Navajo Nation reauthorizes the Health Diné Nation Act of 2014 to help fight diabetes and other health conditions

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, and Vice President Myron Lizer, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish, and community health advocates celebrated the signing of Resolution CD-96-20, which reauthorizes the Healthy Diné Nation Act of 2014 to allow the continuation of the two-percent sales tax on unhealthy foods and beverages to fund community-based wellness projects that promote healthy living among Navajo people. The resolution was signed into law in Window Rock, Ariz. during a small outdoor event with CDC guidelines in place.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez signs Resolution CD-96-20, reauthorizing the Healthy Diné Nation Act of 2014, into law in Window Rock, Ariz. on Dec. 31, 2020.

The Health Diné Nation Act of 2014 was first signed into law on Nov. 21, 2014 by former President Ben Shelly, which initiated the two-percent sales tax and has since funded the completion of numerous wellness projects on the Navajo Nation intended to promote healthy living and to help fight health issues such as diabetes. The 2014 bill included a sunset clause that called for the sales tax to expire at the end of 2020, unless reauthorized through legislation.

“This was a community-driven initiative several years ago, and now we are seeing the positive results. In the last several years, we have more and more of our Navajo people taking on the challenge of creating a healthier lifestyle by practicing the teaching of our elders known as T’áá hwó’ajít’éego, or self-reliance and self-determination. Last year, our administration declared a war on diabetes and the Health Diné Nation Act gives us another weapon to fight these health issues. As we continue to fight the spread of COVID-19, it is very important now more than ever to take care of ourselves and to live a healthy lifestyle. I thank the 24th Navajo Nation Council, community health advocates, and all who supported this effort,” said President Nez, who also supported the initiative when he was a member of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council. He also thanked former Council Delegate Danny Simpson for sponsoring the legislation in 2014.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also thanked Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty for bringing the legislation forth for reauthorization of the sales tax, and also recognized the hard work and advocacy of Denisa Livingston with the Diné Community Advocacy Alliance and Gloria Begay with the Diné Food Sovereignty Alliance, who were very instrumental in driving the initial legislation and reauthorization.

“Healthy living is a top priority for this administration. We certainly appreciate the support from the grassroots level that helped initiate this effort to promote healthy living among our people. We look to them for guidance and we are pleased to join them on this special occasion to reauthorize the Health Diné Nation Act of 2014,” said Vice President Lizer.

The community wellness projects may include farming and vegetable gardens, greenhouses, farmers markets, wellness/exercise equipment, skate parks, health classes, traditional and non-traditional healthy food preparation classes, playgrounds, basketball courts, and many others. In 2014, a separate legislation was also signed into law eliminating the entire sales tax for healthy fruits and vegetables sold in stores on the Navajo Nation.

“Our efforts have been and still are deeply rooted in intergenerational collective action, in community, and in relationship to address our diabetes epidemic, to reclaim our identity through traditional healthy food, and to improve the health and well-being of our people through the funding of Community Wellness Projects made possible by our Act. We are continuing to address the inhumanity of food apartheid that we face on our Diné Nation and the continued presence of harmful foods and beverages that are contaminating our traditional lifeways and foodways. In this COVID-19 pandemic, many of our people are challenged by numerous vulnerabilities with pre-existing health conditions and it is imperative to continue to protect the health and well-being of our tribal citizens and community members,” said Denisa Livingston with the Diné Community Advocacy Alliance.

“For the last three to four years, we did studies and surveys to assess the impact of this Act in the communities. All of the reports showed very successful outcomes, so we’re happy to see it continue. It’s great to see the grassroots people design this Act and take care of their people with community wellness projects. I am very thankful to all of the people who helped with this,” stated Gloria Begay with the Diné Food Sovereignty Alliance.

The Nez-Lizer Administration also commend the recent three-year reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians, which was established in 1997 to help combat the growing epidemic of diabetes among Native Americans by providing funding for treatment and prevention. The reauthorization was passed by Congress on Dec. 21 and signed into law by President Trump Dec. 27. The program also provides tremendous support for the war on diabetes.

The reauthorization was approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council by a vote of 21-0 on Dec. 23, 2020. The reauthorization of the Healthy Diné Nation Act is effective immediately.

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