



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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**Nez-Lizer present their vision for the CARES Act
funding and call on Navajo Nation leaders to work together**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — During a live town hall address on Friday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer said the Navajo Nation’s \$600 million in CARES Act funding should be directed to help the Navajo people by providing for first responders, health care, water, power, and telecommunications infrastructure, agriculture, small businesses and enterprises, elderly care needs, educational needs, and scholarships for students entering the health care and public safety fields. The Nation’s two top leaders also said it’s critical that the Navajo people hold all of their elected leaders accountable for the use of the funds, including chapter officials, members of the Navajo Nation Council, and the Office of the President and Vice President.

“We need transparency and accountability every step of the way. The three branches of government need to come together and have a unified approach. This is not the time to play politics – it’s time to work together with all branches of government, not just one. As President and Vice President we were elected by the vote of the entire Nation, not just a few chapters so we represent the voices of all communities. Prior to being elected by nearly two-thirds of the Navajo voters, we visited over 70 chapters and spent long-hours listening to the needs of the people so we are well-informed of the priorities in every region,” said President Nez.

President Nez added that the legislation introduced by the Legislative Branch on Thursday is “unworkable” because the language of the bill severely limits the use of the \$600 million and places nearly all of the authority to decide the use of the funds in the hands of the 24-members of the Council. The leaders also said any legislation regarding the use of the CARES Act funds is subject to the line-item veto authority granted to the President by the Navajo people through a referendum years ago.

“Many people and entities worked hard to fight and advocate for the CARES Act dollars for the Navajo people and we should not have a legislation that is decided only by the Council. Schools, chapters, enterprises, and many others worked with the Navajo Nation Washington Office to compile the data that was submitted to the Department of the Treasury that secured the \$600 million and now the Council is wanting full control over the funds. Yes, they’ve asked for public

comments, but they rushed the introduction of the legislation while only allowing a day or two for public comments,” added President Nez.

He also noted that when the Navajo Nation received a \$554 million settlement from the federal government in 2014, public hearings were held and a report was compiled outlining the priorities of the Navajo people. “We don’t need to re-invent the wheel because we all have a good idea what the needs of our communities and people are based on their prior input,” he stated.

Vice President Lizer also stated that health care and pandemic experts continue to caution people across the country about the possibility of a second wave of COVID-19. “Although the \$600 million comes with provisions and a deadline, we need to plan for the long-term future of our Nation and for future pandemics,” Vice President Lizer said.

“We’re learning a lot from this current pandemic. We know we need to become more self-reliant in terms of growing our own food, producing more health care and medical workers, empowering our Navajo entrepreneurs, making sure our first responders are better-equipped and that includes tele-communication, and developing more facilities to treat and care for our elders. This is a prime opportunity to plant the seeds that will help our Navajo people for many years to come,” added President Nez.

They also called on the federal government to consider reviewing or waiving “red tape” that often stands in the way of development and progress, especially considering the CARES Act provision that calls for the funds to be used by the end of 2020.

“If the federal government can waive restrictions for a federal agency to build a wall along the border with another country, they can do the same to assist the first people of this country,” said President Nez.

The Office of the President and Vice President, through its Navajo Economic Stimulus Team, will continue building a strong proposal that is inclusive of the Navajo people, chapters, enterprises, schools, health care workers, and many more. President Nez and Vice President Lizer look forward to working with the 24th Navajo Nation Council and Judicial Branch.

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