



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2020

Nez-Lizer request Council members to vote down veto overrides and to work in unity for the Navajo people

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are requesting members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council to vote down three separate legislations that seek to override vetoes based on justifications previously outlined by the Office of the President and Vice President and to pursue new legislations that address the many concerns and issues with the three original legislations. The override legislations are part of the proposed agenda for the Council’s special session scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. on Friday.

“We were all elected by the Navajo people to work together and not against each other. This back and forth with vetoes and overriding needs to stop and we need to work together on legislations from the starting point to make sure that all issues and concerns are addressed before being voted on. These legislations have good intentions, but there are major concerns with how the legislative process is being rushed with little to no public input, the ramifications of the language of the bills, and the lack of thorough debate on the Council floor which would help to provide reasoning and explain the need to approve such measures,” said President Nez. “Let’s work together, put our differences aside, and show our Navajo people that we are stronger when we are united.”

President Nez and Vice President Lizer outlined their reasoning for vetoing the three measures in separate letters that were delivered to each member of the Council. The leaders also request the Navajo people to email the Council members at 24thNNC@navajo-nsn.gov to voice their opposition to the three overrides.

Numerous legislations have been introduced to address certain issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the bills are introduced as “emergency legislations,” which allows the legislations to bypass the consideration and debate of all Standing Committees and without the mandatory five-day public comment period that allows Navajo citizens the opportunity to provide input. The use of the “emergency legislation” clause is very questionable for many of the legislations, including the three bills that are scheduled to be considered by the Council on Friday.

Recently, President Nez and Vice President Lizer reached out to Speaker Seth Damon and Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne to arrange a three-branch chiefs meeting to consider a united path forward

to use the \$600 million in CARES Act funding to effectively address infrastructure needs, first responder needs, telecommunications, and other items. President Nez requested Speaker Damon to reconsider Legislation No. 0115-20, and to develop new legislation that is inclusive of the three branches of government.

Unfortunately, Speaker Damon continued to rush the bill through three Standing Committees within two days to make it eligible for consideration by the Council on Friday. President Nez has previously stated that the bill sponsored by Speaker Damon is “unworkable” due to its shortcomings in addressing the true needs. According to the Office of Legislative Service’s website, the legislation sponsored by Speaker Damon has only received four supporting comments from the Navajo public since its introduction on May 7.

“We understand that there is a deadline to use the \$600 million and we have conveyed to our Congressional delegation and federal officials that we need an extension considering that we had to file a lawsuit to have the federal government release the funds six weeks after it was approved and signed into law. We need a well thought out plan that is inclusive of the Judicial Branch and Executive Branch. The Council has our commitment to work in good faith,” said President Nez.

On Thursday, a new and more comprehensive legislation was introduced that would immediately provide \$50 million for items such as Personal Protective Equipment, food, water, and care packages for Navajo people, to help health care facilities, and certain governmental needs that will help to keep employees working under safer conditions. The new bill also proposes the creation of a work group comprised of members from each branch of government that may also include representatives from chapters and individuals with expertise in certain areas such as health care and emergency management that is tasked with developing other expenditure plans. Legislation No. 0116-20 is currently in the five-day comment period.

On Wednesday, President Nez and Vice President Lizer also accepted an invitation from the Resources and Development Committee to discuss the CARES Act funding and to present the new bill. The leaders had a very thoughtful discussion where all of the members of the Resources and Development Committee spoke of the need to work together. President Nez and Vice President Lizer stated to the members that they are committed to moving forward on a positive path with the committee and the entire Council.

“This is a time for true leadership to be put into action for the benefit of the Navajo people. We should not be bickering among one another, but we should be having more thoughtful discussions on how to best utilize the \$600 million in a way that is inclusive of the three branches of government and speaks to unity among our leaders and the Navajo people. Legislation No. 0116-20 is the best option to accomplishment that,” stated Vice President Lizer.

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.