



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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**U.S. Department of the Treasury announces the release of a portion
of CARES Act funding for tribes weeks after the approval of Congress**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation stands to receive over \$600 million from an \$8 billion tribal set aside from the Coronavirus Relief Fund established in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act. The purpose of the Coronavirus Relief Fund is to provide local governments resources to cover necessary expenditures due to COVID-19.

This announcement comes following the collaborative efforts by the Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Washington Office, various departments and divisions, enterprises, and schools to gather and certify data to the U.S. Department of Treasury and the U.S. Department of the Interior to determine allocation amounts. On Tuesday, the Office of the President and Vice President received notice directly from the White House and during a roundtable discussion attended by Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer, hosted by President Trump in Phoenix, Ariz.

On April 21, the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, on behalf of the Navajo Nation, joined a lawsuit to ensure the maximum allocation of the Coronavirus Relief Fund to tribal governments. Recently, the Departments announced that for-profit Alaska Native Corporations were eligible to receive a share of the Coronavirus Relief Fund, which would effectively decrease the amount federally-recognized tribes would receive. On April 27, the D.C. District Court ruled in favor of the tribes including the Navajo Nation, which led to the Department's announcement to begin distributing funds to federally-recognized tribes.

On Tuesday, the Departments announced the following plan to disburse the \$8 billion fund:

- Distribute 60 percent of the \$8 billion to Tribes based on population data used in the distribution of the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG), subject to a floor of \$100,000. This data is based on U.S. Census figures and is already familiar to Tribal governments.
- Distribute the remaining 40 percent of the \$8 billion based on the total number of persons employed by the Indian tribe and any tribally-owned entity, and further data to be collected related to the amount of higher expenses faced by the tribe in the fight against COVID-19.

- Payment to Tribes will begin today based on the population allocation, and will take place over several banking days. Amounts calculated for Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act regional and village corporations will be held back until pending litigation relating to their eligibility is resolved.
- Payments to tribes based on employment and expenditure data will be made at a later date. Treasury will work with Tribes to confirm employment numbers and seek additional information regarding higher expenses due to the public health emergency.

“The Treasury is only releasing 60-percent of the funds, which clearly indicates that they are going to continue to fund Alaska Native Corporations. It’s shameful that the first citizens of this country are having to fight over and over for what is rightfully ours. Alaska Native Corporations should not receive funds that were specifically allocated for federally-recognized tribes. Today’s announcement of funding for tribes is far too late. We’ve lost 79 lives so far and we have far too many of our people who have the virus,” said President Nez.

He added, “Had we received the funding when Congress approved it nearly six weeks ago, we might be in a better position today. Through the media, our congressional delegates, and letters to federal agencies, we’ve done our best to hold the federal government accountable and we will continue to do so.”

“It is important to begin economic recovery efforts across the Navajo Nation because our economy is at the core of our survival as a Nation. That is why we are working tirelessly to ensure the protection and health of our communities and tribal members. We asked each of our stakeholders to report expenditures and total number of employees so we can begin understanding how COVID-19 has impacted employers, businesses, and sectors of the Navajo Nation government. With that information, we certified this data to the federal government. I am happy to see our efforts recognized with the announcement of over \$600 million coming to the Nation. These funds are going to go a long way with providing government operations and services,” Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer said.

Early on, the Nez-Lizer Administration began the inquiry on the economic impact of the coronavirus on Navajo Nation investments and natural resources. The administration worked closely with congressional members to ensure that tribes were included in the \$2 trillion stimulus package – of which tribal nations received \$8 billion.

The Navajo Nation Washington Office was instrumental in collecting and organizing data required for the Nation’s certification to the Department of Treasury. “I’m very proud of the hard work and leadership exhibited by members of my team. We knew how important the Nation’s certification was to the process including the need to gather the data within a limited timeframe,” said Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Santee Lewis. “This feat was accomplished with the assistance of various Divisions, Enterprises, Schools, and Chapters across the Navajo Nation so I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who supplied the requested data.”

The Office of the President and Vice President, as well as the Navajo Nation divisions, look forward to ensuring the federal stimulus funding is put to good use to ensure the Navajo Nation’s economic recovery. “As Navajo teachings tell us, one has to put a portion of the crop away for

future use.” said President Nez. “The Coronavirus Relief Fund will allow the Navajo Nation general fund to be held in abeyance while federal funds are used. Navajo Nation leaders and chapter officials should adhere to this wise Navajo teaching. We cannot have meetings for the sake of unplanned and unwise spending. The Executive Branch will provide a comprehensive plan for the effective use of these stimulus funds.”

“We have a long way to go to recover from the coronavirus pandemic. I am happy that we have a solid team in place preparing for the day when our communities can come back stronger and healthier. We will get there together through unity, resilience, and prayer. We will get there sooner if we obey the social distancing guidelines and curfews. The less we travel or intermingle, the better our chances to overcome this virus. We lost many of our beloved relatives and family members to this virus, but our teachings also tells us to move forward. We will and we are.” President Nez said.

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