



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

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Nez-Lizer Administration approves hardship relief funds for enrolled Navajo Nation members, chapter relief funds, and broadband initiatives**

*“All Navajo Nation CARES Act funds have now been allocated”*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer approved two separate resolutions on Friday, adopting the hardship assistance expenditure plan to provide over \$49 million in CARES Act funds for emergency financial assistance for enrolled members of the Navajo Nation through an application and approval process administered by the Office of the Controller.

In accordance with the hardship assistance expenditure plan approved by the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council, enrolled Navajo Nation members who were at least 18-years-old or older as of March 1, 2020 may receive up to \$1,500 based on eligibility criteria determined by the Office of the Controller, and \$500 per person for individuals who were under the age of 18-years-old as of March 1, 2020. The plan developed by the Navajo Nation Council also states that the eligibility criteria and the application process developed by the Office of the Controller will be subject to approval by the Council’s Health, Education, and Human Services Committee and Budget and Finance Committee. The Office of the Controller will ultimately be responsible for overseeing and monitoring the expenditure of the funds.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also approved \$90 million for the Division of Community Development, to administer the chapter distribution expenditure plan to provide additional COVID-19 relief at the local level using the chapter 50/50 formula. The approved resolution also includes over \$20 million to provide additional support for the Office of the Controller to administer CARES Act funds and to provide oversight and compliance with guidelines.

“The Nez-Lizer Administration previously proposed hardship relief funds through a different distribution mechanism that prioritized elders, students, and those most in need, but we understand that there is a great need for financial relief due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$49 million expenditure plan development and approved by the Navajo Nation Council is not enough to help every enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, so these funds should be directed to elders and those most in need, but there will be an opportunity to increase funding for hardship relief

for enrolled members if chapters do not use the \$90 million allocation by the end of November. All Navajo Nation CARES Act funds have now been allocated and the Office of the Controller now has the financial support to ensure accountability, compliance, and distribution of a majority of the Nation's CARES Act dollars," said President Nez.

In a letter to Speaker Seth Damon, President Nez and Vice President Lizer requested that the Council allow time for divisions, departments, and programs to focus on implementing CARES Act expenditure plans in coordination with the Office of the Controller, rather than spending long hours presenting multiple reports requested by the Council and its Standing Committees.

"Our recommendation to the Office of the Controller is to develop the criteria and application process so that elders and those living in remote areas without internet access are able to apply and that those in the most need of financial assistance be prioritized. This should not be a free-for-all distribution of funds. At the end of the day, all leaders along with the Office of the Controller will be held accountable for the use and expenditure of the CARES Act funds," stated Vice President Lizer.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also approved \$15 million to provide more broadband initiatives to expand internet access on the Navajo Nation and \$2 million for the Division of Community Development to help administer the chapter relief funds.

With the approval of the two resolutions, the Navajo Nation has now allocated all of the \$714 million in CARES Act funds received from the federal government. President Nez continues to urge all members of the Navajo Nation to respond for the 2020 Census, noting that the Navajo Nation's CARES Act funding allocation was determined by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Congress based on the 2010 Census count.

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