



The Navajo Nation
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**President Nez and Vice President Lizer
deliver the State of the Navajo Nation Address**



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer deliver the State of the Navajo Nation Address from the Office of the President and Vice President in Window Rock, Ariz. on April 19, 2021.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer presented the State of the Navajo Nation Address virtually to the 24th Navajo Nation Council on Monday, during the opening day of the Spring Council Session.

At the start of the address, President Nez took time to honor and remember former Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye who passed away on April 15 at the age 69, following a long battle with cancer, and former Navajo Nation President Albert Hale who passed away on February 2 due to complications from COVID-19. He then turned his focus to the Navajo Nation’s fight against COVID-19 and the variants.

“On March 30th, we announced the first confirmed case of the B.1.1.7 variant, also known as the U.K. variant, which was identified in the western portion of our Nation. One week later, the B.1.429 variant known as the California variant was identified in the Chinle Service Unit, and most recently, in the Gallup Service Unit and Shiprock Service Unit. Despite these new challenges, our

Navajo people have managed to keep our numbers of new COVID-19 infections relatively low. This is in large part due to the commitment of our health care workers who have worked non-stop to administer the COVID-19 vaccines since December,” said President Nez. He also stated that he has recommended current Navajo Area IHS Director Roselyn Tso to be appointed to serve as the Director of Indian Health Service, to oversee all IHS regions across the country.

The Navajo Area Indian Health Service recently reported that 246,465 vaccine doses have been received, and 214,309 of those doses have been administered, representing 87%. 93,813 of our people have been fully vaccinated.

Regarding the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Act Plan, the Nez-Lizer Administration continues to recommend a funding formula based on four factors that include population, land base, number of employees, and direct COVID-19 impacts measured by coronavirus infections, deaths, and other key factors.

“The general strategy for the American Rescue Plan funds should be to maximize and leverage funding each of the funding opportunities, not only from the \$20 billion, but also from the other pots of funding that will become available,” stated President Nez.

He and Vice President Lizer also highlighted the Diné Atiin Bahane: Navajo Road Emergence White Paper, which is a document created by the Nez-Lizer Administration that requests the federal government to enact seven specific policy changes to improve the Navajo Nation’s transportation system. The document, which was presented to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg on April 13, also outlines specific challenges and successes related to transportation projects and initiatives in support of the recommended policy changes.

“Our position is that the Navajo Nation has built up our capacity with the establishment of the Navajo Nation EPA and Division of Transportation over the years, and we have many well-educated experts with vast experience that are capable of administering much of the oversight and regulatory authority that the federal agencies currently control. Our experts know what the issues are and they have solutions, but we need changes at the federal level to improve the processes that will deliver a safer and more efficient transportation system that supports economic opportunities, emergency response services, access to education, and enhance the Navajo Nation’s overall ability to be more self-sufficient in the long-term,” stated President Nez.

He also spoke about the Biden-Harris Administration’s proposed \$2 trillion jobs and infrastructure plan, also known as the American Jobs Plan, that proposes large investments for transportation infrastructure, clean drinking water, high-speed broadband, electrical infrastructure, affordable and sustainable housing, clean energy development, home and community-based care for elderly and disabled, manufacturing and small business, research and development, workforce development, and educational initiatives.

“Our administration, through the Navajo Nation Washington Office, continues efforts to coordinate and advocate for additional support through the American Jobs Plan for the Navajo Nation,” President Nez said. The leaders also urged the Council members to amend the Veterans Housing Program policy to help create housing manufacturing facilities to construct more homes for Navajo families.

“The COVID-19 pandemic magnified the need for more homes for Navajo families. On March 25, we were notified that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will provide \$50 million through the American Rescue Plan Act to the Navajo Nation, to help carry out affordable housing activities. We are all aware of the living conditions for many Navajo families. We have multiple generational families living under one roof, which is beneficial for the purpose of passing along our teachings from one generation to the next, but it has also increased the number of COVID-19 infections among our people. With the incoming HUD funds, we are committed to developing more housing to help reduce the risks of COVID-19 in the coming years,” stated Vice President Lizer.

The State of the Navajo Nation Address also highlighted several recent accomplishments including the completion of pavement on Navajo Route 27 between Nazlini and Chinle, ongoing widening of Navajo Route 12 in Tsaile/Wheatfields, and the start of construction of N11 in Mariano Lake.

In regards to energy development, the Navajo Nation recently finalized leases for the Red Mesa Tapaha Solar Generation Plant and the Cameron Solar Generation Plant, which will produce 70-megawatts and 200 megawatts respectively, of emissions-free solar energy once construction is completed. NTUA is working with their partners to begin constructing the projects.

In addition, President Nez met with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland to advocate for the full restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument to 1.9 million acres. He thanked Secretary Haaland for her willingness to meet with tribes and other stakeholders.

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to advocate for amendments to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act in support of Navajo people who continue to experience long-term health impacts due to radioactive contamination and exposure from abandoned uranium mines and to oppose the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s draft Environmental Impact Statement that proposes to transfer uranium waste from the Northeast Church Rock abandoned mine site to another site located very close to Navajo Nation trust lands.

The Navajo Nation remains steadfast in our position that all NECR radioactive mine waste registering above the U.S. EPA’s action level should be removed entirely from the community. Simply transporting it to a facility less than one mile away from our Nation is insufficient. We have to hold the federal government accountable and uphold the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act, which prohibits and transportation of uranium waste on our lands. We will continue to advocate this position for the health and wellness of our Navajo people.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also requested support from the Council for full funding for the water and electricity for 27 Navajo families residing in the Westwater Subdivision in the state of Utah, a \$50 million scholarship initiative for Navajo students, and the Permanent Trust Fund Five-Year Plan to help meet direct service needs and governmental operation needs.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council accepted the report by a vote of 18-0, which is available online at: <https://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/From-the-Office/State-of-the-Navajo-Nation>.

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