



The Navajo Nation  
Office of the President and Vice President

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**President Nez cites COVID-19 variants for vetoing bill  
that sought to reopen Navajo Nation roads to visitors**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Citing the recent confirmed cases of two COVID-19 variants on the Navajo Nation and increasing numbers of variant cases in southwest states, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez vetoed Resolution CMA-17-21 on Friday, which would have reopened Navajo Nation roads to all visitors and tourists.

“The CDC confirmed this week that the U.K. variant is now the dominant COVID-19 strain in the United States, and we recently confirmed that the U.K. variant and the California variant are here on the Navajo Nation as well. We discussed this issue with our public health experts and agreed that we need to continue to monitor the variants to see the extent of their impacts in the next few weeks before we consider reopening our roads to visitors. We also need to continue the efforts to vaccinate more of our residents here on the Navajo Nation to move closer to herd immunity and this will take time. I understand that people want to travel and visit our sites here on the Navajo Nation, but we have to prioritize the health and well-being of our people,” said President Nez.

The resolution was approved by the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council with no debate on March 26, by a vote of 20-1. On March 31, the Navajo Nation announced the first confirmed case of the U.K. variant followed by the first case of the California variant, B.1.429, on April 6.

“When the Council considered this resolution, they did not have the benefit of knowing that these two variants were present in our communities because the variants were detected days later. I respectfully ask the members of the Council to respect the advice and recommendations of our public health experts on this matter. The state of Arizona has lifted nearly all COVID-19 restrictions and the state of Utah will be lifting its mask mandate tomorrow. Today, Arizona reported 1,302 new cases of COVID-19, which is a large increase from previous days. We need more time to monitor the impact of these changes in mandates and the trend in new COVID-19 cases,” added President Nez.

On Thursday, the Navajo Department of Health reported 15 new COVID-19 positive cases for the Navajo Nation, which brings the overall number of positive cases to 30,213 since the start of the

pandemic last year. The total number of deaths is currently 1,260. In addition, the state of Arizona reported 670 new cases, Utah reported 483, and New Mexico reported 266 on Thursday.

“Our daily numbers of new COVID-19 cases continue to fluctuate and our health experts are advising that we wait a little longer before reopening our roads to visitors. All around the Navajo Nation, we are seeing the numbers of infections fluctuate as well. We have to remain diligent and not let up our guard too soon. We encourage everyone to get tested if you feel symptoms related to COVID-19 and our public health experts continue to encourage our people to get vaccinated to help push back on the virus and variants,” said Vice President Myron Lizer.

In addition, President Nez delivered a letter to U.S. Sec. of the Interior Deb Haaland on April 7, requesting the National Park Service to hold off on reopening the east entrance to the Grand Canyon National Park, until the Navajo Nation meets with the National Park Service and the Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent. The road leading to the east entrance is located within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation.

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