



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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President Nez and Vice President Lizer offer support for the introduction of technical amendments to the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, and Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Santee Lewis meeting with U.S. Rep. Tom O'Halleran in Washington D.C. on Nov. 15, 2021.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer offered strong support for the introduction of technical amendments to the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974, Pub. L. 93-531, which were introduced on Friday through a bill sponsored by Arizona Congressman Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ), who represents the Navajo Nation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974 was intended to settle a historic land dispute between the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe. Despite the opposition of the Navajo Nation, the legislation ultimately mandated the forced relocation of thousands of Navajo people from ancestral lands in northeast Arizona.

“For generations, Navajo people have faced hardships caused by the forced relocation from our ancestral lands in northwest Arizona. This sad legacy disrupted the way of life for nearly 16,000 Navajo citizens, including many elders, and separated them from their ancestral homelands — forever changing their quality of life. Our people relocated to other communities in accordance with federal promises of adequate housing, social services, and infrastructure that have yet to be fulfilled. Congressman O’Halloran has long recognized the sacrifices of our people and the Federal obligations through the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974. This legislation will finally set the federal government on the path of fulfilling these long-awaited promises. We stand united with Congressman O’Halloran in support of this bill as a matter of fundamental justice for the Navajo Nation,” said President Nez.

The technical amendments were developed in close consultation with the Navajo Nation with the support of the Office of the President and Vice President. On Nov. 15, President Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, and Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Santee Lewis met with Congressman O’Halloran and discussed the technical amendments and infrastructure needs for the nine Navajo communities that are within the former Bennett Freeze area.

If enacted, the bill would restore federal obligations from the original Settlement Act with a federal commitment to account for the comprehensive impacts of the relocation on Navajo relocatees, and assure that adequate housing and related community facilities and services, such as utilities, roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, are available at relocation sites. The technical amendments would also advance Navajo sovereignty, authorize critical funding, and expand rehabilitation activities in the former development freeze area.

“The traditional lifeways and subsistence practices of our people, often referred to as relocatees, and their descendants were disrupted, causing deep physical, spiritual and cultural harm that has been passed on through the generations. In addition, similar federal action mandated a development freeze to a nearly 1.6-million-acre area encompassing nine Navajo Nation chapters that has severely impaired community and economic development. We need Congress to support this bill to resolve these longstanding issues,” said Vice President Lizer.

Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office Executive Director Robert K. Black stated, “It’s a major step towards resolving numerous issues that affect our Dine people who are still feeling the negative impacts of relocation. If passed by Congress, the amendments will make a huge impact on the lives of many of our people. I thank President Nez, Vice President Lizer, and the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission for their support and help developing this bill. We encourage our Congressional leadership to pass the amendments.”

The Office of the President and Vice President thanks Congressman O’Halloran, Navajo-Hopi Land Commission, Navajo Nation Washington Office, and many others who support the bill.

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