



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 24, 2021

Navajo Nation leaders and NTUA highlight CARES Act infrastructure accomplishments with U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, Speaker Seth Damon, and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority General Manager Walter Haase met with U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) on Tuesday, to provide an overview of NTUA’s successful completion of electric line connections to homes, water/wastewater projects, installation of water lines and cistern/septic systems on homes, telecommunications projects, and off-grid using federal CARES Act funds that were allocated and approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council and signed into law by President Nez.

During the discussion held via teleconference, NTUA General Manager Haase also recognized Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority, private contractors, and other utility companies that collaborated and partnered with NTUA. He reported the following accomplishments that were completed within the federally mandated timeline:

- 719 homes connected to electric grid
- 301 off-grid solar installations for homes
- 117 water and wastewater capacity upgrades/replacements
- 140 electric capacity upgrades/improvements
- 105 water cistern system installations for homes
- 30 waterline and septic connections to homes
- 139 broadband installations and capacity upgrades/improvements
- 4 new broadband/cell phone towers
- 43 temporary wifi hotspots for students

President Nez commended NTUA and its partners for completing many infrastructure projects and improvements within the federal timeline that was mandated, and later extended, by the U.S. Treasury Department. He also spoke about the federal regulations that create challenges and noted that the Nez-Lizer Administration developed a “White Paper” last year, which was shared with federal agencies outlining specific federal regulations that hinder progress and also provided specific recommendations for changing those regulations and policies.

“I thank you, Senator Luján, for always supporting tribal nations especially when it comes to managing our own federal funds and oversight. We could’ve accomplished even more projects

and improvements with the CARES Act funds if we had more time beyond the initial federal deadline. We also had to contend with federal and internal regulations. We are in the process of updating the 'White Paper' for the new administration and we will also share those recommendations with members of congress as well," said President Nez.

Vice President Lizer also offered his support for NTUA and review of federal regulations to better streamline and expedite the completion of more infrastructure projects in the future.

"NTUA has done a great job with the resources and timeframe they had, but we want to do more because we know the needs are great within our communities. We've had many success stories and many families who are very appreciative of the work that's been done. Those success stories do not receive much notice and attention, but we've been out in the communities visiting NTUA work crews and the families that are receiving the benefits. We know there are many more needs and we stand ready to work together with our federal partners, NTUA, NECA, our Navajo businesses, and many others," said Vice President Lizer.

In January, the Biden-Harris Administration announced the "American Rescue Plan," a legislative funding package that would provide funds for COVID-19 vaccinations, provide direct relief to families, support for small businesses and communities, funds to help schools reopen, funding for tribes, and many other resources to help mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to meet with federal agencies and members of congress to advocate for more funds through the "American Rescue Plan," which is currently in the legislative process.

"We hope that there will be a second-round of funding because there is still so much more that needs to be done, especially with the relentless COVID-19 pandemic raging on," said NTUA General Manager Walter Haase. "We know we can get the work done, if we are given the resources with an appropriate time line."

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.