



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
January 6, 2021

**President Nez and Vice President Lizer approve
\$2.5 million to offset federal scholarship funding shortfall**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez signed Resolution CD-97-20, approving \$2.5 million from the Navajo Nation’s Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Aid to provide scholarship funds for Navajo students through the Higher Education Program. The legislation was sponsored by Council Delegate Eugene Tso.

On Dec. 16, 2020, the Navajo Area Bureau of Indian Affairs informed the Navajo Nation that there was no available funding for the Higher Education Program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior through a P.L. 93-638 contract. In a letter sent to the Navajo Nation, BIA Regional Director Bartholomew Stevens wrote, "The BIA NRO [Navajo Regional Office] does not currently have any available funding for the Higher Education Program because the Secretary of the Interior has not received funds for the program. Therefore, the present applicable funding level for the contract is \$0."

“We met with the Navajo Area BIA office to discuss the funding needs for the Higher Education Program and we are optimistic that the issue will be resolved. The funds were appropriated by Congress and signed into law on Dec. 27 and now we await the funding to be released, which might not happen when the new administration takes office. Upon receipt of those funds, the \$2.5 million from the Navajo Nation’s UUFB will be reimbursed in accordance with the resolution that was passed by the Navajo Nation Council. I commend the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Aid and the 24th Navajo Nation Council for moving forward with the funding request to prevent a disruption in scholarship funding, so that our students can continue on with their education,” said President Nez.

According to the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Aid, a total of 13,269 students submitted applications in 2019. Using available resources, the office was able to provide awards to half of all applicants. Federal funds of \$13.4 million comprised more than 53 percent of the total amount available for awards to students in 2019.

The Nez-Lizer Administration previously put forth legislation to set-aside \$50 million from the Navajo Nation’s Síhasin Fund to help fund scholarships for Navajo students and also proposed

allocating CARES Act funds for financial assistance for students – both proposals were not approved by the Council.

“We need to work together to develop and finalize long-term solutions and more partnerships that provide reliable funding for students each semester. Students should not have to drop out of college or face unnecessary financial burdens caused by delays in federal funding. We thank the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Aid and the 24th Navajo Nation Council for addressing this current matter, and we stand ready to work toward long-term solutions,” stated Vice President Lizer.

Resolution CD-97-20 was approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council on Dec. 28 by a vote of 22-0 and is effective immediately with the final approval of President Nez and Vice President Lizer. The resolution states that the \$2.5 million will be reimbursed to the Navajo Nation upon receipt of federal funding.

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