



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo Nation opposes Arizona bill that opens door to segregating Navajo and Hopi people and drastically reducing funds for direct services

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued letters to the Arizona State Senate and Gov. Doug Ducey on Monday, outlining the Navajo Nation’s opposition to Arizona S.B. 1653, which seeks approval from the State Legislature and the Governor’s Office to establish a “Joint Study Committee on County Boundaries to research and report on the fiscal and related impacts of a change in the boundary between Apache County and Navajo County.”

The measure would potentially put the State Legislature on a path toward creating a new and separate county for the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe, without the benefit of property tax revenue that provides the majority of funding for managing county roads, waste management, emergency management and preparedness, and many other direct services for Navajo and non-Navajo people who reside in both counties. Lands held in trust by the federal government are not subject to property taxes because they are considered federal lands. Proponents of the bill argue that creating a new county would allow tribes access to sales tax revenues, however sales tax revenues are far less than the property tax revenue that Apache County and Navajo County currently receive.

“Across the country, in a time when people of color are standing up against racial inequalities, discrimination, and injustices, we have a bill being fast-tracked through the Arizona State Legislature that would open the door to segregating the Navajo and Hopi people into one county and that would almost eliminate the financial resources needed to provide direct services for citizens in Apache County and Navajo County. This divisive initiative has been attempted many times before and failed over and over. We do not need a study committee to tell us that creating a new and separate county for tribes would be very detrimental to the direct services and quality of life for all residents, and lead to more inequality. We ask all State Legislators and Governor Ducey to do what is right for our Navajo people by opposing S.B. 1653,” said President Nez.

S.B. 1653 was fast-tracked through Senate committees, and amended to provide funding for the study committee, and now awaits consideration by the full Senate. The Navajo Nation also anticipates a similar bill to be introduced in the House.

“If this bill becomes law, it would fund a study committee that may very well tell us what we already know – that creating a new county specifically for Navajo and Hopi people will nearly eliminate all county funding for direct services. There is a misguided perception that Native Americans do not pay taxes, but in reality, tribal nations contribute greatly to the tax revenues generated for the state of Arizona. Many Navajo people purchase goods and services off of the Navajo Nation and that creates millions of dollars in revenue for other communities and counties. We call upon the elected leaders in the State Senate and House to do what is right and stop S.B. 1653 from moving forward,” said Vice President Lizer.

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to work with state, county, and other officials to oppose S.B. 1653.

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