



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Nez-Lizer Administration recommends funding formula for COVID-19 relief funds in the American Rescue Plan

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer, along with cabinet members, have worked diligently with Congressional members and staff to develop preliminary recommendations for a funding formula for federally-recognized tribes in anticipation of the approval of the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9 trillion relief package designed to help the United States recover from the devastating impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. House passed the original American Rescue Plan bill on Feb. 17. On March 6, the Senate passed its version of the bill, which will head back to the House for a final vote that is expected this week. President Biden is expected to sign the rescue package into law.

The American Rescue Plan would provide \$20 billion for federally-recognized tribes to help mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus. The version of the bill passed by the Senate provides significant discretion for the Secretary of the Treasury to determine funding for each tribe and states that \$1 billion will be distributed equally among tribes. The Nez-Lizer Administration is recommending that allocations be based on four factors that include population, land base, number of employees, and direct COVID-19 impacts measured by coronavirus infections, deaths, and other key factors.

“As of today, we have nearly 30,000 reported infections of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic nearly one year ago, and we have lost 1,203 of our Navajo people. The data show that the Navajo Nation was hit very hard by COVID-19, but thanks to our health care workers, frontline warriors, and our Navajo people, we are pushing back and fighting hard to mitigate the impacts and save lives. Our focus lately has been working with Congress to avoid delays in distributing the funds to tribes and to recommend a funding formula. The Navajo Nation had to sue the federal government to receive our share of the CARES Act funds last year. Then we had to contend with the overwhelming regulations and restrictions that were included. We learned a lot from the CARES Act, and we want to avoid those types of issues this time around by ensuring that we receive the funds in a timely manner and that the policies are not so restrictive this time so that we can move forward to provide direct assistance and to complete projects that provide long-term benefits for our Navajo people,” said President Nez.

The Office of the President and Vice President recommended that the \$20 billion for tribes be distributed with 40-percent based on population, 20-percent based on land base, 20-percent based on number of employees, and 20-percent based on COVID-19 impacts.

“We realize that there are great needs in our communities, immediate and long-term. With the CARES Act, we had a very short timeframe to expend the funds due to the original deadline that was included in the bill enacted by Congress, but we did our best to connect homes to electricity, provide water to homes, strengthen broadband, and provide direct financial assistance to our Navajo people. The current bill being considered would provide a greater timeframe to use the funds, which will allow us to plan more efficiently and complete more projects and provide more long-term assistance. We appreciate all of the support and collaboration of our Congressional members and federal partners throughout this process,” said Vice President Lizer.

The American Rescue Plan would also provide approximately \$6 billion for Indian Health Service, \$1.2 billion for HUD tribal and Native Hawaiian housing programs, \$1.1 billion for educational programs including the Bureau of Indian Education, over \$1 billion for tribal child care programs and \$75 million for tribal TANF, \$900 million for Bureau of Indian Affairs programs, \$600 million for economic and infrastructure investments, \$20 million to mitigate the impact of on Native languages, and \$19 million to help combat domestic violence.

Among other funding, the American Rescue Plan also includes direct stimulus payments of \$1,400 for individuals, extends unemployment compensation, continues existing eviction and foreclosure moratoriums, funding for schools to mitigate COVID-19, and provides funds for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

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