



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

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President Nez discusses the American Rescue Plan Act and other priorities with Congressman O'Halleran

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez met with Arizona Congressman Tom O'Halleran (AZ-D) in Window Rock, Ariz. on Wednesday, to discuss the implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act, consultations with federal agencies, transportation infrastructure priorities, recommended changes to federal regulations, water sanitation projects, and the status of the Bears Ears National Monument.

“Congressman Tom O'Halleran has been a strong advocate for the Navajo people. We were pleased to update him and his staff on our progress, working with the 24th Navajo Nation Council and the Judicial Branch, to implement the American Rescue Plan Act funds that are anticipated to arrive in the coming weeks. In order to expedite the completion of more infrastructure projects to provide long-term benefits for our communities, we also need our federal partners to consider changes to federal regulations and policies that often hinder progress on tribal lands. Our administration has developed a white paper that outlines specific recommendations to change regulations under several federal agencies. I look forward to continuing our work with Congressman to move forward on these issues and many more,” said President Nez.

On Monday, President Nez met with the 24th Navajo Nation Council and Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne to discuss the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan. The Act provides \$20 billion for tribes – \$1 billion is to be allocated equally among the 574 federally recognized tribes while the U.S. Department of the Treasury will decide how the remaining funds will be distributed to tribes.

“The general strategy for the American Rescue Plan funds should be to maximize and leverage funding each of the funding opportunities, not only from the \$20 billion, but also from the other pots of funding that will become available. We have been engaged in tribal consultation sessions with various federal agencies, regarding the American Rescue Plan. We are recommending that the funds be distributed as direct funding to tribes, and not in the form of grants that may require additional documentation and applications,” said President Nez.

During the three branch chiefs meeting on Monday, President Nez also spoke about the Nez-Lizer Administration's work with the Biden-Harris Administration, congressional members, and federal agencies to advocate for a fair funding formula for federally-recognized tribes 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. President Nez also outlined general priorities related to direct relief, infrastructure development, economic recovery, housing, long-term planning, and more.

President Nez also joined Congressman O'Halleran on Monday, to mark the introduction of his new bill, the National Energy Workforce and Providing Recovering Opportunities to Manage the Industry's Shifting Economics also known as the "NEW PROMISE Act," which aims to provide economic development resources to communities affected by the closure of the Navajo Generating Station, and those like it across the United States. The bill would also establish job and skills training programs for displaced employees, and invest in affected tribal areas.

"NGS was a powerhouse for northern Arizona and the many rural and tribal families who relied on the good-paying jobs it provided," said Congressman O'Halleran. "With the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism has plummeted, especially from the international visitors the Page community was so used to welcoming. In introducing my updated NEW PROMISE Act, I am taking into account the concerns of tribal leadership, county, local, and statewide stakeholders to provide an all-of-the-above recovery approach for the community of Page, and so many communities like it across rural America, where hardworking folks are out of a job due to no fault of their own."

The Nez-Lizer Administration is also in the process of delivering a "white paper" to the Biden-Harris Administration, Congressional members, and federal agencies that outlines specific recommendations for changes to federal regulations and policies that would improve the process for development and improvements on tribal lands. In addition, the Navajo Nation Washington Office and Navajo Division of Transportation are leading efforts to advocate for a transportation priorities package in anticipation of the introduction of a transportation bill in Congress.

President Nez briefly spoke about the Navajo Nation's ongoing advocacy for the full restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument for the protection of 1.9 million acres in the southeastern portion of Utah. The landscape is the ancestral home of many southwestern tribes and the birthplace of Navajo Headman Manuelito. Tribal nations depend on the land within the region to sustain their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices, such as hunting, gathering, and ceremonies.

On Dec. 28 2016, former President Obama designated 1.35 million acres of land under the Bears Ears National Monument, in accordance with the Antiquities Act of 1906. President Trump later reduced the size of the designation by 85-percent, or 202,000 acres, which continue to be contested in court by several tribes including the Navajo Nation. The Nez-Lizer Administration, along with several other tribes, continues to support the restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument to encompass 1.9 million acres.

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