



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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First Lady Nez and Second Lady Lizer commend New Mexico Governor's approval of bills to address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez and Second Lady Dottie Lizer extend their appreciation to New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham for signing into law Senate Bill 12, establishing a position within the Office of the New Mexico Attorney General to address missing and murdered Indigenous women and relative (MMIWR) cases in the state, and signing Senate Bill 13, establishing an annual event, "Missing in New Mexico Event," to raise awareness of MMIWR cases.

First Lady Nez, who continues to serve as one of the original New Mexico MMIWR Task Force members since its creation in 2019, stated that two bills are necessary because Native American women in New Mexico have the highest rate of homicide among all racial and ethnic groups and are more than twice as likely to be the victim of violent crime under the current system.

"There is a demand for justice for survivors, victims, and their relatives. It is important to build upon strong networks to support the efforts to identify, report, and find missing Indigenous persons and increase support for families and survivors. These bills move us a step closer to healing our families and communities. We are very thankful to the state legislators, Governor Lujan Grisham, and all of the grassroots organizers and families that continue to raise awareness," said First Lady Nez.

Senate Bill 12 creates the position of an Indigenous Persons Specialist within the Office of the New Mexico Attorney General, to improve case management and law enforcement collaboration of MMIWR cases. The specialist will work collaboratively with all federal, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies and assist in investigating and prosecuting MMIWR cases, including the Navajo Nation.

On Feb. 4, President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Nez met with Gov. Lujan Grisham, House Speaker Brian Egolf (D-Dist. 47), and state legislators at the New Mexico State Capitol in Santa Fe, N.M. to advocate for legislative priorities on behalf of the Navajo Nation, including Senate Bill 12 and 13.

"On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we thank Governor Lujan Grisham and our legislators for recognizing the importance of reuniting, restoring, and healing tribal families and communities through these historical bills. Working together with the New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force, we continue to address MMIWR issues, including the need to close gaps where missing persons cases often fall into, identifying jurisdictional misinterpretations, fostering coordination among tribal nations, and developing innovative strategies to assist law enforcement. Today, with the support of New Mexico leaders, we move closer to minimizing the number of unsolved MMIWR cases and to begin healing families," said President Nez.

The new laws will further strengthen partnerships and increase collaborations among tribal governments and reporting mechanisms for quicker notification of MMIWR cases, allowing missing persons to join back their loved ones effectively and efficiently.

"We are glad that Indian Country regarding MMIW is finally being recognized. Within three years, we worked closely with state and federal leaders to bring awareness. We also commend the Trump Administration for bringing this awareness to the forefront and for the Biden/Harris Administration for continuing this important and urgent work - our relations deserve it. I appreciate and thank Governor Lujan Grisham for the two bills being signed today to bring awareness of MMIWR to the great state of New Mexico," said Second Lady Lizer.

The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President extends its appreciation to New Mexico State Sen. Shannon D. Pinto (D-Dist. 3), Sen. Linda M. Lopez (D-Dist. 11), and Rep. Andrea Romero (D-Dist. 46) for sponsoring the bills, and Secretary of Indian Affairs Lynn Trujillo, the MMIWR task force members, partners, and volunteers, for providing recommendations regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives that affects many tribal communities throughout the state of New Mexico and the Navajo Nation.

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