



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

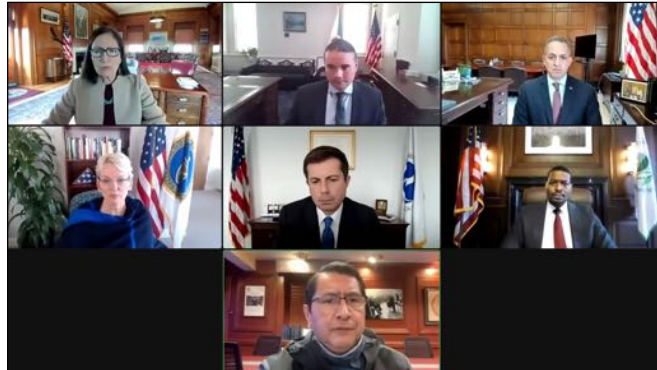
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**President Nez addresses the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
before the White House Council on Native American Affairs**

WINDOW ROCK Ariz. — On Monday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez spoke about infrastructure development on the Navajo Nation, during the White House Council on Native American Affairs' virtual inaugural engagement session, which provided an opportunity for tribal leaders to have meaningful input on the policies and deliveries of the Biden-Harris Administration. The second part of the session focused on missing person issues in tribal communities.



The White House Council on Native American Affairs was first established by former President Barack Obama in 2013, to improve the coordination of federal programs and the use of available federal resources for the benefit of tribal communities. The Biden-Harris Administration re-established the Council, which is co-chaired by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and White House Domestic Policy Advisor Ambassador Susan Rice. Other members include the heads of federal Departments, Agencies, and Offices.

“Tribal nations have a seat at the table with the Biden-Harris Administration. Today’s engagement session is another step in the right direction to having our voices heard by the White House and federal agencies on key issues related to the Infrastructure Law that was signed by President Biden and missing persons issues as they relate to the Executive Order issued by the White House last November. We have to continue working together and keeping the lines of communication open in order to keep this momentum going to help our tribal communities,” said President Nez.

During the session, President Nez highlighted the need to streamline the approval process for completing environmental assessments and securing rights of ways to expedite infrastructure development in tribal communities. Last year, the Nez-Lizer Administration developed a transportation white paper titled, “Diné Atiin Bahane: Navajo Road Emergence,” requesting the

federal government to enact seven specific policy changes to improve the Navajo Nation's transportation system.

"Many of the projects funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will take years to come to fruition because of the various layers of approval required to build any kind of infrastructure. We need to be able to streamline the approval process. We circulated a white paper detailing these issues and we can work to overcome this. Once again, we urge this Administration to improve these administrative processes. Without doing so, it will take years for tribal communities to reap the benefits promised to them in the Infrastructure Law," added President Nez.

He also recognized and thanked several Biden-Harris cabinet members who recently visited the Navajo Nation and those who have met with Navajo leaders including, U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm, EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan, and Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

Federal officials also received comments from tribal leaders regarding the Biden-Harris Administration's Executive Order issued last November, directing federal officials to work hand in hand with tribal nations and tribal partners to build safe and healthy communities and to support comprehensive law enforcement, prevention, intervention, and support services to help address missing and murdered Indigenous people.

Under the leadership of Secretary Haaland, the Bureau of Indian Affairs established a missing and murdered unit to focus on analyzing and solving missing and murdered cases involving Native American people. During Monday's session, she reaffirmed her commitment and stated that the Biden-Harris Administration would be moving forward with consultations with tribes, in accordance with the Executive Order signed in November.

The White House Council on Native American Affairs will continue hosting the tribal leader engagement session three times a year, in addition to the annual White House Tribal Nation Summit. The Nez-Lizer Administration thanks the Biden-Harris Administration and will continue working closely with its federal partners on key issues including infrastructure development and missing persons.

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