



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## President Nez speaks in support of broadband connectivity for the Navajo Nation during federal consultation session

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Friday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez joined other tribal leaders during a virtual consultation session hosted by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) regarding the Biden-Harris Administration’s \$2 billion investment for broadband connectivity for tribal nations, which was part of the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act approved by Congress. President Nez joined U.S. President Joe Biden for the signing of the infrastructure bill in November.

In addition, NTIA began accepting applications from tribes last year for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, which provided \$980 million through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. NTIA limited funding applications to \$55 million per tribe. In September, NTIA reported that 280 applications were received from tribal nations, totaling over \$5 billion.

The Nez-Lizer Administration, through Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office Executive Director Christopher Becenti, submitted an application for 80 broadband projects in various communities on the Navajo Nation in collaboration with Navajo Tribal Utility Authority and Navajo Technical University. NTIA continues to review applications.

During the consultation session, President Nez stated that tribes should be afforded the opportunity to submit additional broadband projects beyond the \$55 million cap that was imposed prior to the approval of the \$2 billion. He also reminded federal officials of the time it takes for broadband related projects to be completed, due to many factors including recent delays in the supply chain for fiber, steel, and many other products.

“While the Navajo Nation awaits consideration of its funding application through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, the Nez-Lizer Administration continues to be proactive in pursuing other broadband grants and funding sources. Through the American Rescue Plan Act, our Administration has a proposal before the Navajo Nation Council to allocate \$208 million for broadband projects. The Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office continues to look at many ways of leveraging many sources of funding to expand broadband for homes, first responders, schools, businesses, and many others,” said President Nez.

NTIA National Tribal Government Liaison Adam Geisler hosted the session and heard from several tribal leaders and representatives who spoke in support of expanding the scope of funding to include the recently approved \$2 billion. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo also spoke during the session and stated the overall goal is to serve as many tribes as possible and called the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds an “incredible opportunity” for tribal nations.

“The ongoing pandemic has demonstrated the great need for enhanced broadband with many people tele-working, schools providing virtual learning options, and our first responders having to respond to emergencies in remote areas. We are very optimistic that these collective efforts will lead to many new towers, fiber lines, and high-quality internet for our Navajo people and communities,” said Vice President Myron Lizer.

“Through the hard work and collaborative efforts with the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commissioners, service providers, NTUA and NTU, we were able to successfully package this grant application. We look forward to future collaboration with all our stakeholders to close the digital divide on the Navajo Nation,” stated Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office Executive Director Christopher Becenti.

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to work closely with the Biden-Harris Administration, states, and other partners to leverage funding for broadband expansion on the Navajo Nation.

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