



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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President Nez testifies before Congress in support of securing advanced appropriations for Indian Health Services

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez testified before Congressional members in support of H.R. 5549, the “Indian Health Services Advance Appropriations Act,” during the Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples’ virtual hearing.

President Nez, who also serves as a member of the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), was invited to provide testimony on behalf of all 574 tribes within the United States. In 2021, the NIHB helped to ensure that \$19.7 billion was allocated to Indian Country as part of the American Rescue Plan Act.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez during the Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples’ virtual hearing on July 28, 2022.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation and all tribes represented within the NIHB, I am here to voice my support for advance appropriations for the Indian Health Services as a bi-partisan effort demonstrated in previous legislative and appropriations sessions. Furthermore, H.R. 5549 is a continuation of this bi-partisan effort and the Navajo Nation and NIHB are pleased to see advance appropriations included in the President’s FY 2023 funding request. There are many health care issues in Indian Country, and with the collaboration with other tribal nations, we have to ensure that our tribal citizens have access to adequate health care and services,” said President Nez.

Advance Appropriating the Indian Health Services would mark the first commitment by Congress to truly recognize the treaty and trust obligation for health care on Indian Country and shield tribes from the devastating impacts of government shutdowns. We look forward to continuing to work with this Congress to support H.R. 5549, President Nez added.

President Nez's testimony focused on support for the Indian Health Services Advance Appropriations Act, which was introduced by the late U.S. Senator Don Young (R-AK). He addressed the challenges the Navajo Nation faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the IHS system surrounding the federal government's recent 35-day shutdown and reliance on impermanent continuing resolutions.

The 2013 budget sequester was especially damaging – slashing the IHS budget by five-percent, approximately \$221 million, and including the impacts of that year's shutdown. IHS is the only federal health delivery program not protected from government shutdowns and continuing resolutions. During federal government shutdowns, retaining IHS health physicians in rural tribal communities is challenging.

“Support for H.R. 5549 will demonstrate the commitment of Congress to address the health inequities and ensure adequate health and wellness services and resources of tribal communities. We commend the Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples for their support and we look forward to Congress' support,” added President Nez.

The hearing is available to view online: <https://naturalresources.house.gov/hearings>.

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