



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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President and First Lady Nez visit the White House to advocate for Navajo Nation priorities

WASHINGTON D.C. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Phefelia Nez were welcomed to the White House on Wednesday, by the Biden-Harris Administration’s Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Director Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Special Assistant to President Biden on Native American Affairs Elizabeth Washburn and Director of Tribal Affairs PaaWee Rivera, to address priorities related to infrastructure development, missing persons initiatives, Navajo relocatees, and to offer support for President Biden’s recent nomination of Roselyn Tso, a member of the Navajo Nation, to serve as the next Director of the Indian Health Service.

President Nez stated, “The Biden-Harris Administration supports tribal nations and it’s evident through the funding provided through the CARES Act, ARPA, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. We have built a strong partnership with President Biden and First Lady, Dr. Biden, which has helped to move issues forward. We continue to urge the Navajo Nation Council to approve infrastructure funds through ARPA so that we can get to work on getting more running water, electricity, broadband, roads, and housing for our Navajo people. We are also working closely with the Biden-Harris Administration to update the archaic policies that slow down the development of infrastructure such as right-of-way clearances. We appreciate the discussion with the White House as we work toward more solutions.”



President Nez also thanked the White House officials for nominating current Navajo Area IHS Director, Roselyn Tso, to serve as the head of the Indian Health Service nationwide. In April of last year, President Nez issued a letter to President Biden and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra recommending Director Tso's nomination and continues to meet with U.S. Senators to request their support for her confirmation.

"Director Roselyn Tso is exceptionally qualified to oversee the IHS on the national level based on her many years of service at the IHS headquarters, regional level, and now the Navajo Area IHS. She has been on the frontlines during the COVID-19 pandemic and was an instrumental part of our proactive mitigation efforts that led to the Navajo Nation having one of the highest COVID-19 vaccination rates in the world. Her commitment to providing quality health care for all people is extraordinary. We thank President Biden for his support," stated President Nez.

First Lady Nez also spoke about her efforts to work with first responders and state and federal partners to finalize a Tribal Community Response Plan (TCRP) aimed at coordinating resources and policies to improve response efforts when people are reported missing.

"The plan includes four components including law enforcement response, victim support services, media and communications strategies, and the integration of community-based resources. Our ultimate goal is to effectively collaborate to heal, restore, and reunite families, especially our women and children," said First Lady Nez.

President Nez and Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Director Robert K. Black also requested the Biden-Harris Administration to appoint a commissioner to oversee the Office of Navajo-Hopi Indian Relocation to work with the Navajo Nation to support Navajo relocatees with housing improvements and other benefits. Navajo Veterans Administration Director James D. Zwierlein was also in attendance to offer support for efforts to establish a veterans outreach benefits center and veterans hospital as part of the construction of a new hospital facility to replace the Gallup Indian Medical Center.

"We greatly appreciate the Biden-Harris Administration for opening the doors to the White House to have the voices of the Navajo people heard. We have a seat at the table and we will continue to advocate on behalf of our people and communities," added President Nez.

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