

## Portion of CARES Act funding for tribes to be released

Written by gallupsun  
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A roundabout journey that included a court case has led to the announcement May 5 that the Department of the Treasury will release part of the \$8 billion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act fund.

On April 21, the Navajo Nation Department of Justice joined a lawsuit on behalf of the Navajo Nation, to ensure the maximum allocation of the fund to tribal governments. Recently there had been an announcement that for-profit Alaska Native Corporations were eligible to receive a share of the CARES fund, which would effectively decrease the amount federally-recognized tribes would receive.

On April 27, the D. C. District Court ruled for the tribes, including the Navajo Nation, which led to the announcement that funds would be distributed to federally-recognized tribes.

On May 5, the following plan for disbursement was released.



□ Distribute 60 percent of the \$8 billion to Tribes based on population data used in the distribution of the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG), subject to a floor of \$100,000. This data is based on U.S. Census figures and is already familiar to Tribal governments.

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- Distribute the remaining 40 percent of the \$8 billion based on the total number of persons employed by the Indian tribe and any tribally-owned entity, and further data to be collected related to the amount of higher expenses faced by the tribe in the fight against COVID-19.
  
- Payment to Tribes will begin May 5 based on the population allocation, and will take place over several banking days. Amounts calculated for Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act regional and village corporations will be held back until pending litigation relating to their eligibility is resolved.
  
- Payments to tribes based on employment and expenditure data will be made at a later date. Treasury will work with Tribes to confirm employment numbers and seek additional information regarding higher expenses due to the public health emergency.

“The Treasury is only releasing 60-percent of the funds, which clearly indicates that they are going to continue to fund Alaska Native Corporations. It’s shameful that the first citizens of this country are having to fight over and over for what is rightfully ours. Alaska Native Corporations should not receive funds that were specifically allocated for federally-recognized tribes. Today’s [May 5] announcement of funding for tribes is far too late. We’ve lost 79 lives so far and we have far too many of our people who have the virus,” Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez said.

“Had we received the funding when Congress approved it nearly six weeks ago, we might be in a better position today. Through the media, our congressional delegates, and letters to federal agencies, we’ve done our best to hold the federal government accountable and we will continue to do so,” Nez added.