

Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act approved May 15

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\$600 million to benefit the Navajo People

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - The 24th Navajo Nation Council voted to approve the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act on May 15 by a vote of 19 in favor, 4 opposed with the council speaker not voting.

The Act is a monumental shift in the Navajo Nation's budgeting and procurement policies that lay the groundwork for allocating the more than \$600 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stimulus Act funding received by the Nation the week of May 4.

The resolution of the Council will now be presented to the Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez for his signature to make the Act law.

"The action taken by the Navajo Nation Council to pass the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act will save countless lives," 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon said. "In only one week, the Council has approved an entirely streamlined system for spending more than \$600 million for the benefit of the Navajo People.

"I can say with total confidence that this is the progress the Navajo People have been seeking,"

Damon said.

The existing Navajo Nation procurement process has been identified as the main bottleneck in spending the entire \$600 million.

The Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act replaces the current Navajo Nation process with a set of procedures that expedites payments from Navajo Nation accounts.

Notably, it allows both Navajo Nation and non-Navajo Nation government entities to be involved in the allocation of novel coronavirus relief funding for the immediate and long-term needs of the Navajo People.

“This first step addresses the many concerns presented by the Navajo public when it comes to the ‘red-tape’ that Navajo people presented to the Council through the public commenting period,” Damon said. “As we know, hundred[s] of Navajo citizens and organizations have submitted comments to the Navajo Nation Council through the official commenting process, and not one spoke against the passage of the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act.

“We call on President Nez to immediately sign the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act into law,” he added.

The Office of the President and Vice President has ten days to act on the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act resolution. In accordance with Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code, the President of the Navajo Nation may choose to enact the law or issue a veto on the resolution.