

Luján calls for action to address inequities on Tribal Nations

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 17 July 2020 03:10



NAMBÉ, N.M.— During a remote hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Committee focused on addressing the urgent needs of Tribal communities, Congressman Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., the U.S. House Assistant Speaker, called for action to address the inequities facing Tribal nations that have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congressman Luján pointed to bridging the digital divide, adequately funding the Indian Health Service, investing in infrastructure, and expanding compensation for individuals impacted by radiation exposure as critical parts of a robust response to the pandemic in Tribal communities.

“The conversations [I have had] with Tribal leaders and Pueblo leaders have made clear that the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated challenges and inequities that long existed before COVID-19,” Lujan said July 8. “The inequities include a lack of access to broadband, insufficient housing support, barriers to ensuring an accurate Census count, and a failure to guarantee access to the ballot box.

“Simply put, the federal government is not living up to its trust responsibilities. Housing, water, health care, road, and broadband projects are underfunded, and often wait for federal approval while communities suffer. These failures span many decades and presidential administrations, and it’s not acceptable,” Luján added.

During Luján’s questioning, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez noted the importance of supporting broadband connectivity at Tribal anchor institutions such as Tribal libraries, schools,

Luján calls for action to address inequities on Tribal Nations

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 17 July 2020 03:10

and Chapter Houses by making them eligible for the Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate program, which Luján has championed.

Luján has also called for the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2019 to be included in future COVID-19 relief legislation to help ensure justice for communities impacted by radiation exposure.

Earlier this month, he secured provisions in the House-passed *Moving Forward Act* to spur broadband deployment and connect school buses to Wi-Fi to address the homework gap that rural and Tribal students face.

Luján has also called out the Trump administration for failing to share crucial health data with Tribal health authorities and awarding a \$3 million contract to a former Trump White House official who delivered substandard personal protective equipment to the Indian Health Service.

Staff Reports