

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez to present CARES Act proposal

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez presented a \$652 million CARES Act funding proposal to the 24th Navajo Nation Council during a special council session on July 28, including funds for the following:

- Over \$143 million for water projects.
- Over \$40 million for power line projects.
- Over \$94 million for telecommunications and broadband development/implementation.
- \$2 million for the Diné Hataali Association, Diné Medicine Men Association, and the Native American Church.
- \$128 million for COVID-19 testing kits, isolation sites/services, emergency medical transportation, mobile medical units, vaccinations, contact tracing/case managers/data support/callers/epidemiology services, vehicles/equipment for food deliveries for elders.
- \$60 million for business relief.
- Nearly \$12 million for chapters.
- \$40 million for undergraduate college student relief.
- \$5 million for graduate college student relief.

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- Over \$5 million for Navajo Head Start centers.
- Nearly \$4 million for teacher development and student support.
- Over \$3.7 million for technical needs for Department of Diné Education.
- \$5 million for educational incentives under Department of Diné Education.
- \$20 million for housing improvement projects.
- Over \$15 million for assistance for elders.
- \$739,000 for Chinle Youth Corrections.
- Over \$4 million for Canoncito health care facility.
- Over \$22 million for former Bennett Freeze housing and solar projects.
- Over \$22 million for Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.
- Over \$5 million for Navajo Shopping Centers, Inc.
- Over \$10 million for the Judicial Branch.

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- Over \$7 million for propane and natural gas winter relief.

Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer presented the funding proposals during a recent three-branch chiefs meeting. In June, the 24th Navajo Nation Council approved Resolution CJN-47-20, which states that the three branch chiefs of the Navajo Nation shall develop and prepare expenditure plans that incorporate the needs of the whole Navajo Nation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Navajo people are demanding that our Nation’s leaders work together to put the CARES Act funds to use for the people and our communities – that is what this comprehensive funding proposal seeks to accomplish. The funding requests are similar to those that were included in a previous legislation that was supported by the Navajo people. Unfortunately, when that legislation went before the Council, there were many amendments passed that removed critical funding. Now it’s time to move forward in unity and fund these critical needs,” Nez said.

On July 4, the Nez-Lizer Administration approved \$62 million in CARES Act funding for:

- \$21 million for special duty pay for frontline workers and other essential personnel for the COVID-19 response.
- \$10 million for Personal Protective Equipment for frontline workers and other essential personnel.
- \$10 million to ensure that the facilities operated by the Navajo Nation are disinfected and otherwise safe for returning employees and the public seeking governmental services.
- \$10 million for food, water, and basic necessities care packages and related items.

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- \$2 million for computer hardware and software for government offices to improve tele-work capabilities for employees to carry services for the Navajo people.

- \$3.5 million for bathroom additions and upgrades for Navajo residents.

- \$3 million for P.L. 93-638 health care facilities.

- \$2.5 million for expenses to facilitate the procurement and/or improvement of the Navajo Nation's financial system to process Navajo Nation CARES Fund expenditures.

"As of now, all tribes have until Dec. 30, 2020 to use the CARES Act funds. We are optimistic that Congress will consider and approve an extension, but until then we are on a strict timeline to expend and use the funds for COVID-19 response efforts. Over the course of several weeks, we have received numerous funding proposals and we've done our due diligence to determine what projects and initiatives are shovel-ready and ready to be implemented immediately. We look forward to discussing these funding proposals with the members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council. We have to be prepared for the long-term," Vice President Myron Lizer said.