Written by gallupsun
Friday, 20 November 2020 17:31

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, Speaker Seth Damon and several members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council issued a letter to the Gallup McKinley County Schools Board of Education members, requesting their support of a resolution to have students return to virtual learning, as opposed to hybrid learning, as cases of COVID-19 continue to increase significantly in surrounding areas.

The resolution was unanimously passed by the board members by a vote of 5-0-0 during a special meeting held on Friday.

“As you are aware, the pandemic has impacted governments, communities, schools and our families. The harm COVID-19 has caused is insurmountable. We are making every attempt to mitigate and recover from the impacts. Policies and procedures have been developed to minimize the spread of COVID-19, and we continue to experience our Country’s 3rd surge and the Navajo Nation’s 2nd surge. Both of which are equally devastating to America and the Navajo people,” states the letter signed by President Nez, Vice President Lizer, Speaker Seth Damon, and Council Delegates Mark Freeland, Pernell Halona, Edmund Yazzie, Wilson C. Stewart, and Jamie Henio.

A news release states from OPVP stated that the Navajo Nation has supported online learning for all students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, to help reduce the spread of the virus and to keep students, teachers, administrators, and all school employees safe and healthy.

“We thank the Gallup McKinley County Schools Board of Education for their support and acknowledgement of our Nation’s sovereignty regarding this matter, and for setting an example for other school districts," Nez said. "Unfortunately, we have other school districts near and around the Navajo Nation where many Navajo students are enrolled and continue to be put at risk of COVID-19. We need these school districts to hear our concerns about the safety and health of our people, and take action to return to virtual learning full-time for the remainder of the school year. We cannot play politics with the health and lives of our children, teachers, parents, and others. This invisible monster known as COVID-19 is real and we have to do everything we can to fight it together."

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On Oct. 22, the 24th Navajo Nation Council approved a resolution by a vote of 23-0 opposing all in-person instruction at all schools and supporting the Navajo Nation Board of Education's recommendation for virtual learning.

"The 24th Navajo Nation Council has prioritized the health and safety of our students, teachers, and all school workers since the start of this pandemic that continues to devastate our communities with the latest rise in COVID-19 cases," Damon said. "I commend my colleagues and the Gallup McKinley County Schools Board of Education for demonstrating strong leadership and for prioritizing the well-being of our students above all else. We strongly urge other school districts to do what is right for our people."

On Thursday, the Navajo Department of Health, in coordination with the Navajo Epidemiology Center and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service, reported that the total number of COVID-19 cases for the Navajo Nation has reached 14,085, and a total of 618 deaths.

"We have lost far too many of our Navajo people and we are losing many across this country as well," Council Delegate Mark Freeland said. "



It's heartbreaking to hear stories of families who have lost loved ones. We have to be united in our fight against COVID-19 and I thank the Gallup McKinley County Schools Board of Education for supporting our Navajo students. We have to remain diligent and strong and continue to pray for our Nation,"