

President Nez approves \$4 million for youth employment

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SHIPROCK, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer were joined by students, families, 24th Nation Council Delegate Eugene Tso, and Shiprock Chapter officials on July 1, as they signed into law resolution CJNI-29-22, appropriating \$4 million from the Nation's Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance for youth employment funds for the 110 Navajo chapters. The funds may be used throughout the year to employ Navajo youth.

“With today’s signing of the resolution, we are demonstrating our commitment and support to provide employment opportunities for our Navajo youth throughout the year. Youth employment is a great strategy to ensure that our youth gain valuable workforce experience, create networks, and foster positive traits such as independence, responsibility, and interpersonal skills,” Nez said.

Nez said giving young people jobs would be the first step in letting them give back to their communities.

“The wages they earn will also help cover their expenses for school clothing, supplies, and other necessities. We are confident that by providing jobs for our youth, that our Nation will see the benefits as they become adults and give back to their communities,” Nez said while also thanking the 24th Navajo Nation Council for approving the legislation sponsored by Tso.

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During the signing ceremony, Nez recalled that as a summer youth worker at Shonto Chapter Governance years ago his interest in government and public service grew and inspired him.

“Youth summer employment can lay a strong foundation to future career or post-secondary education, and we encourage our youth to explore different professions within the Navajo Nation,” Nez said.

The \$4 million appropriation will be distributed to the 110 chapters based on a “50/50 formula,” meaning that \$2 million will be distributed evenly among all chapters, and the remaining \$2 million will be distributed based on the number of registered voters at each chapter.

“The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to support the youth employment program each year. With the approval, chapters can begin hiring more high school and college students to earn income to help cover academic expenses or cost-of-living expenses,” Lizer said.

Lizer said he’s looking forward to seeing what the employment opportunities will do for the teenagers.

“Youth employment enhances academic aspiration and performance and improves social and emotional development. We will look forward to the success stories of our children at the end of the summer,” Lizer said.

“We do this for our youth first and foremost, not for ourselves. With this approval, chapters will have the opportunity to provide and expand job placements for our young people,” Tso said. “Thank you to my Council colleagues for supporting this.”

Shiprock Chapter President Nevina Kinlahcheeny, Vice President Debra A. Yazzie, and Secretary/Treasurer Dr. J. Kaibah Begay also spoke in support of local youth and expressed their appreciation for the approval of the funding for youth.

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The 24th Navajo Nation Council approved the legislation with a vote of 20-1 during a special session held on June 23.

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