

Nez signs bill for assisted living, cancer treatment centers

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TÓ NANEES DIZI, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez signed into law on Aug. 10 Resolution CJY-36-22, appropriating \$25 million from the Navajo Nation’s Síhasin Fund for the construction of an assisted living center to accommodate elderly and disabled persons, and to expand the existing cancer treatment center located at the Tuba City Regional Health Care Center in Tuba City, Ariz.

The legislation was sponsored by Council Delegate Otto Tso and unanimously approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council on July 26. The Tuba City Regional Health Care Center hosted the signing ceremony, which included the Board of Directors, CEO Lynette Bonar, Tso, and medical professionals.

During the ceremony, Nez recalled that in 2019, he and First Lady Phefelia Nez welcomed U.S. First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden, and the Cancer Support Community to Tuba City to visit the very first cancer treatment center in all of Indian Country, which was developed through partnerships with the Barbara Bradley Baekgaard Family Foundation, Biden Cancer Initiative, Eisai, Merck, and Pfizer.

“We’ve supported the development and expansion of this cancer treatment center since the start and we commend the Tuba City Regional Health Care Center board of directors for being very proactive and having a vision for their communities. That vision is now becoming a reality with today’s signing,” Nez said.

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He went on to explain what having the treatment center means to the Navajo Nation community.

“The expansion of the cancer treatment center means that in addition to hematology treatment, the specialty care clinic will soon be able to provide radiation oncology treatment so that Navajo cancer patients can receive those services closer to home, rather than having to travel longer distance to medical facilities off of the Navajo Nation,” Nez said.

The total cost for the new facilities is \$55 million and the Tuba City Regional Health Care Center is leveraging several funding sources to fund the design, construction, and operation. Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer also worked with the Tuba City Regional Health Care Center, members of Congress, and the White House to help secure an additional \$8 million for the long-term care center, which was signed by President Biden in March.

Nez also spoke about the new assisted living center.

“The need for assisted-living facilities for our elders here on the Navajo Nation is overwhelming. I meet many families who struggle with having to send loved ones to nursing homes far off of our Nation and it takes its emotional and financial toll on many of our people,” Nez said.

He commented on how much the facility will help people.

“With this new facility, we will be able to house as many as 60 elders and disabled people closer to home. In May, we also approved \$29 million to construct and operate a 60-bed nursing home for Navajo veterans in Chinle, Arizona. Progress is being made based on the needs of our people,” Nez said.

“I thank the Tuba City Health Corporation for doing their due diligence to put together the facility proposal that we are now running with,” Tso said. “No longer do our elderly relatives have to go off of their home on the Navajo Nation to get the services they need in their old age and cancer care. It took joint efforts between the Navajo Nation and other entities to be able to start saving countless lives here on the greater western region. This is what happens when leadership comes together.”

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chair Daniel Tso and members Pernell Halona, Edison Wauneka, and Paul Begay were also in attendance for the signing of the resolution. The Tuba City Regional Health Care Center provides health care services to over 36,000 people, including those who reside in the communities of Cameron, Bodaway/Gap, Coalmine Canyon, Kaibeto, LeChee, Coppermine, Tonalea, and Tuba City.

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