

Nez, Lizer highlight multiple issues during State of the Navajo Nation Address

Written by Staff Reports

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WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer presented the State of the Navajo Nation Address on Oct. 17, the opening day of the 24th

Navajo Nation Council’s Fall Council Session.

Jonathan Nez thanked the 24th Navajo Nation Council for approving \$1 billion in funding through the American Rescue Plan Act to deliver water, electricity, broadband, housing for families and veterans, COVID-19 mitigation, bathroom additions, E-911/public safety, local chapter priorities, and hardship assistance.

Within the ARPA resolution, \$210 million was allocated and divided among each of the 24 Council Delegate regions for local priorities. Jonathan Nez encouraged lawmakers to allocate funding for senior centers in their districts.

“The administration has been working diligently to meet the requirements and deadlines of the ARPA allocations. The Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, Fiscal Recovery Fund Office, and other Executive programs have met with the majority of Council Delegates to provide technical support in the development of expenditure plans for each region. As we move forward in this process, we have to remain mindful of the provisions within the resolution and the federal guidelines as we work together to expedite these priorities for our elders, veterans, and families,” Jonathan Nez said.

The \$1 billion includes the following:

\$215 million for water/wastewater

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\$96.4 million for home electricity connections

\$120 million for broadband

\$80 million for housing

\$50 million for housing for Navajo veterans

\$120 million for new hardship assistance applicants

\$150 million for bathroom additions

\$210 million for local chapter priorities

\$35 for E911 and public safety

\$19.2 million for health care

\$5 million for cyber security

\$15.5 million for former Bennett Freeze area housing

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The State of the Navajo Nation Address also included that over 1,100 Diné homes have been connected with electricity and that number continues to grow each month. In September, through the partnership with Utah Governor Spencer Cox, Lt. Governor Henderson, NTUA, and many others, Westwater Suvdivision families in Utah received electricity for the first time.

“Prioritizing electricity connection is life-changing for these families who have lived without electricity in their homes for so many years. Electricity not only provides lighting, heating, and other basic amenities, but it also opens doors to more opportunities. We look forward to seeing thousands more of our Navajo people being connected to the electric grid with the \$96.4 million that was approved through the American Rescue Plan Act funds,” Lizer said.

The State of the Navajo Nation Address also highlighted the recent appropriations that were signed into law for community projects. Jonathan Nez and Lizer thanked the hard work of local chapter officials, community members, Navajo Nation employees, and many others who worked to develop each project funding request.

The appropriations included the following:

\$25 million for an assisted living center for elderly and disabled and to expand the current cancer treatment center at the Tuba City Regional Health Care Center

\$13.2 million for the Kayenta Judicial Complex

\$7.6 million for the Chilchinbeto Multipurpose building

\$4.1 million for an apartment and multipurpose complex in Navajo, New Mexico

\$13.3 million for renovations within Navajo Nation government facilities to improve access to persons with disabilities

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\$11.4 million for the Shiprock hotel and restaurant

\$1.6 million for the Ganado Chapter senior and veterans center project

\$1.2 million for the Tuba City senior center project

\$3.2 million for the Tselani/Cot tonwood Chapter senior center project

\$2.1 million for the Becenti Chapter veterans center project

\$7.2 million for the Gadiiahi/To'koi Chapter community building project

\$2 million for the Nazlini Chapter senior center project

\$2.5 million for the Westwater community for infrastructure development

\$1.6 million for the 2022 Navajo Nation elections

\$203,000 for the Tsaile/Wheatfields cemetery project

The report also highlighted that homes for Navajo veterans are being built. On Sept. 6, Jonathan Nez had the honor of handing the key to a new home to 89-year-old U.S. Army veteran Kee C. Nez in Tecnopuc, Ariz. Kee Nez lost his previous home in a fire and he and his wife had been living with his daughter since.

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The Navajo Veterans Administration, with the support of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, fixed the veterans housing policy and moved this program forward. With the ARPA funds, there is now \$50 million obligated to build many more homes for our Navajo veterans and that process has started.

“In May, the Navajo Veterans Administration also received recognition and became the first federally recognized tribe with a veteran service organization to be accredited by the federal VA. This means that for the very first time, the Navajo Nation now has access to the federal VA systems to prepare, present, and process veterans benefits claims for Diné veterans. The Navajo Veterans Administration now has staff members who are processing federal claims at the local level in each of the five Navajo agencies on the Navajo Nation,” Jonathan Nez said during his address.

Regarding road infrastructure and improvement, the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation, in partnership with the BIA, counties, and others, have provided an overview of road projects in the five Navajo agencies that have made progress since the last State of the Navajo Nation Address in July. Road improvements and maintenance continues to be a priority for NDOT throughout the rainy season.

Jonathan Nez also recognized Roselyn Tso as she took the oath of office to become the first Navajo person to serve as the Director of the Indian Health Services. In September, Tso was also joined by her family as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra administered the oath during the ceremony held in Washington, D.C. As the new head of IHS, Tso now oversees the delivery of health care services to 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives, the management of \$7.4 billion in federal health care funds, and 15,000 IHS employees across the country.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council accepted the State of the Navajo Nation Address by a vote of 21-0.

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