

State of the Navajo Nation Address highlights ARPA funding

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 29 April 2022 04:12



WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ. – During his State of the Navajo Nation Address, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez addressed the nation’s support for American Rescue Plan Act infrastructure funding, veterans housing, and missing persons efforts.

On April 18, Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer presented the State of the Navajo Nation Address, on the opening day of the 24th Navajo Nation Council’s Spring Council Session. The address was conducted virtually from the Office of the President and Vice President in Window Rock, due to COVID-19 restrictions that limit in-person attendance.

President Nez requested the Council’s support for upcoming legislation that will allocate nearly \$1.1 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funds for critical infrastructure development that will deliver \$215 million for water lines and wastewater systems, \$96 million for electricity lines for homes, \$120 million for broadband/telecommunications services, \$150 million for new housing and housing manufacturing, \$150 million for bathroom additions for homes, and over \$15 million to help Navajo relocatees.

The new legislation was carefully developed while taking into account the previous concerns brought forth by members of the Council. It includes an additional \$42 million that was previously allocated to the Executive Branch for administrative costs to help fund the revised legislation that will soon be introduced.

“Construction season is now here and our people need homes, bathroom additions, and all of the basic necessities that we are well aware of,” Nez said. “Our Nation’s technical experts have developed a revised plan that addresses basic infrastructure, public safety, rural addressing, senior centers, wellness centers, detox and healing centers, assisted living facilities,

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warehouses for communities, transitional housing, economic development, housing and additional funding to ensure that all previous and new eligible applicants for hardship assistance receive the help they need.”

The upcoming legislation will also include \$35 million for public safety and rural addressing, \$19 million for senior centers, \$21 million for wellness centers, \$15 million for detox/healing centers, \$15 million for assisted living facilities, \$5 million for warehouses, \$4 million for transitional housing, and \$45 million for various economic development initiatives. Each of the 110 chapters would also be allocated \$745,000 for local projects and initiatives in addition to the funding for critical infrastructure that would benefit all communities.

The State of the Navajo Nation Address also took into account other sources of funding that are available to supplement the ARPA funds such as the Indian Health Service SDS project listing that includes \$543 million for major water projects in many communities and at least \$55 million for broadband development through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, rental assistance through the Navajo Housing Authority, the Biden Infrastructure Law, FEMA reimbursements, and other sources.

“As we move forward, we understand that the needs are great in every community, especially the most rural areas, but we have to be mindful that we are required to be in compliance with the spending guidelines from the U.S. Treasury,” Nez said.

He went into more detail about why following those guidelines is so important.

“There are a total of 83 guidelines that must be followed,” Nez said. “That is a critical component in this process and one year has already passed since we received the initial allocation of ARPA funds. We need to approve this plan so that we can meet the federal deadline, ensure accountability and compliance with federal guidelines and Resolution CJY-41-21, and improve the quality of life for our people.”

The report also highlighted the Office of the First Lady and Second Lady’s work with its partners to develop a Tribal Community Response Plan to find lasting solutions to help find missing persons and to help heal victims and families. The plan will serve to guide the Navajo Nation and its partners to build response capacity, collaboration, and support for missing persons and

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their loved ones. The plan includes four components including law enforcement response, victim support services, media strategies, and the integration of community-based resources.

Nez also spoke about the Navajo Veterans Administration's ongoing construction of new homes for Navajo veterans, which is supported by many veterans across the Navajo Nation. With additional funding through the ARPA, the Navajo Nation will be able to provide many more homes for veterans and families.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council accepted the State of the Navajo Nation Address by a vote of 20-1.

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