



Joint Press Release

Navajo Nation Office
of the President and the Vice President
and Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker



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Navajo Nation seeks bi-partisan support for the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act

WASHINGTON D.C. – President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and Speaker of the 24th Navajo Nation Council Seth Damon, met with U.S. Senate and House members this week to advocate for the passage of House Bill 644, the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act, sponsored by Congressman Rob Bishop (R-UT) of Utah and co-sponsored by Utah Reps. John Curtis (R-UT) and Chris Stewart (R-UT).

President Nez and Speaker Damon met with U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT) who will sponsor similar legislation in the Senate, as his predecessor, Orin Hatch, had done during the 114th and 115th Congresses.



PHOTO: (left to right) President Jonathan Nez, U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, Vice President Myron Lizer, and Speaker Seth Damon in Washington D.C. on Feb. 5, 2019.

They also met with Sens. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Tom Udall (D-N.M.), the Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, to thank them for their support and to request their continued assistance in expediting the bill through the committee.

While on the Hill, the President and Speaker also met with Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Martha McSally (R-AZ), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), and Congresswoman Debra Haaland (D-N.M.) who was recently selected to serve as the Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee and the Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, to discuss issues of importance to the Navajo Nation, and to request their support for the settlement.

“This settlement is an important and essential part of building our communities and economy in Utah where many of our people still lack basic water resources,” said President Nez. “I am thankful to

Representative Bishop and many others who continue to work hard to advance H.B. 644 through Congress and Senator Romney for his willingness to champion this bill on the Senate side.”

The Nez-Lizer Administration and the 24th Navajo Nation Council listed the settlement of water rights in the state of Utah as a top priority.

The Navajo Nation issued its support for the settlement in January 2015 when the 23rd Navajo Nation Council approved legislation supporting the proposed settlement. If the settlement passes, it will provide approximately \$218 million in funding for water infrastructure development projects for Navajo communities in Utah.

“I greatly appreciate the support of my Council colleagues as well as Representatives Bishop, Curtis and Stewart for advocating at the federal level for this settlement,” said Speaker Damon. “We ask the members of the Senate to also support the bill when it comes before Senate members.”

The proposed agreement developed after years of negotiations resulting from a Memorandum of Agreement between the Navajo Nation and the state of Utah in 2003 that allowed the two sides to formally enter into discussions to determine the water rights of the Nation.

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