



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2020

**Navajo Nation Council to hold
Special Session Monday, Mar. 16, 2020**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Speaker Seth Damon announced Friday that a special session of the 24th Navajo Nation Council will be held Monday, Mar. 16, 2020 at the Department of Diné Education beginning at 10:00 AM. The Navajo Nation Council will consider two emergency legislation that will help facilitate the legislative response efforts to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Legislation No. 0054-20 will appropriate funding to disaster relief efforts in the amount of at least \$3 million to assist the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management's operations.

Navajo Nation leaders discussed the ongoing COVID-19 response at a joint press conference Friday morning. By midday, the United States Government declared a national emergency directed towards the COVID-19 outbreak. That declaration was considered by Navajo leaders to be cause for a special session to continue preparing for any potential spread of COVID-19 to the Navajo Nation.

“As of now, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported in any of the Navajo Nation's health care facilities. We appreciate the response by the Navajo Department of Health and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service early on to stand-up essential emergency response programs to ensure the Navajo Nation is prepared,” said Speaker Seth Damon.

Navajo leaders met throughout the day Friday to discuss the escalation of precautionary measures in the surrounding states and on the Navajo Nation. On Friday, President Nez directed a partial shut-down of the Executive Branch and coordinated the closures of schools, parks, and more. Both the Legislative Branch and the Judicial Branch plan to continue delivering full services until a deeper review of statutory functions and possible work-arounds are identified.

“We are always monitoring the latest reports from our local, state, and federal partners. Should the need arise, legislative programs are making headway in allowing remote working arrangements and more,” said Speaker Damon.

Legislation No. 0054-20 also includes a designation of chapter emergency funding to replenish up to \$15,000 in that specific line-item. The supporting provisions will directly support local preparedness.

“Replenishing chapter emergency funding will ensure local governments are well-suited to procuring the necessary goods and services that can provide a safety net against COVID-19,” said Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chair Daniel Tso.

The second emergency legislation, Legislation No. 0055-20, will temporarily waive the requirement in Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code for council delegates to be physically present to cast votes on legislation. The waiver will allow council delegates currently observing a self-isolation period to act on essential legislative items from their respective homes. This action comes after at least six council delegates returned from off-reservation advocacy trips when travel restrictions for the Legislative Branch were issued.

Both the appropriation and the waiver of Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code require a two-thirds vote of the full Navajo Nation Council in order to pass.

Additionally, the special session will be closed to the public out of an abundance of caution for public health.

The special session will be broadcast online on the Navajo Nation Council's website and social media pages. The special session livestream will be available via the Navajo Nation Council's Youtube channel at the URL: www.youtube.com/navajonationcouncil. An additional livestream will be available at: <https://vimeo.com/navajonationcouncil> and on the Navajo Nation Council's Facebook page.

The public can submit their comments on the emergency legislation by sending a detailed email to comments@navajo-nsn.gov. The legislation and associated attachments can be downloaded from the Navajo Nation Council's legislative tracking system, Diné Bibeel'áanii Binaaltsoos (DiBB), online at URL: <http://dibb.nnols.org/publicreporting.aspx>.

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