



Navajo Nation secures \$22 million in Dept. of Housing and Urban Development COVID-19 relief funding

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — More than \$22 million in Indian Housing Block Grants (IHBG) funding was awarded to the Navajo Nation from the third phase of the Congressional COVID-19 relief package. US Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson made the announcement Friday under the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act signed into law by President Trump on Mar. 27, 2020.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation, I thank our federal partners for listening to the voices of the Navajo Nation Council and the leaders of tribal nations across the United States,” said Speaker Seth Damon. “From the beginning, our Congressional representatives have worked with tribal leaders to ensure the Navajo people are supported directly in these federal emergency COVID-19 relief bills.”

The IHBG program was established through the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA). Eligible activities under the program include housing development, assistance to housing developed under the Indian Housing Program, operation and maintenance, modernization, housing services to eligible families and individuals, crime prevention and safety, and more.

Funding for the IHBG program is the first announcement to be made by federal agencies for individual tribal nations. A total of \$200 million was appropriated to IHBG through the CARES Act for all federally recognized tribes. Using existing formulas, the Navajo Nation was allocated \$22,333,177, followed by the Cherokee Nation at \$9,387,252 and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation at \$4,975,248.

An additional \$100 million was allocated under the CARES Act to the HUD’s Indian Community Development Block Grants (ICDBG) program. HUD has not yet announced awards through that program.

“The spread of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation is fundamentally tied to the housing infrastructure gaps we face,” said Speaker Damon. “The Navajo Nation’s housing plan, implemented by our tribally designated housing entity, NHA, will be able to speed up much needed improvements to housing on our Nation. We expect this to positively affect our elderly, senior citizens and veterans, especially.”

The Navajo Housing Authority operates and maintains 715 NAHASDA-funded public rental housing units and 654 homeownership units on the Navajo Nation. NHA will be a key partner in the Navajo Nation’s COVID-19 pandemic response efforts as greater numbers of Navajo citizens are directed to stay home unless absolutely necessary.

As of Thursday, the Navajo Epidemiology Center reported 241 total positive cases of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation, a 13% increase from the day before. 8 deaths have been attributed to COVID-19. Navajo Nation officials issued a nation-wide curfew from 8:00 PM - 5:00 AM and have closed government offices to all but essential staff. A second state of emergency was declared on Mar. 31 until Apr. 26, 2020 in response to the spread of the coronavirus.

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