



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2020

**Legislative Branch to close, Council to
continue addressing COVID-19 legislation**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Speaker Seth Damon directed all Legislative Branch programs to close administrative offices and to begin implementing remote work plans for all staff on Mar. 18, 2020. The directive was issued Wednesday morning in a branch-wide communication as an emergency public health measure.

“This is a necessary measure to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). All legislative branch staff are highly encouraged to remain home and to reduce or eliminate personal travel unless vital and necessary,” said Speaker Damon in the memorandum.

The Legislative Branch of the Navajo Nation employs approximately 200 staff within 13 legislative support programs, commissions and offices. The closures will be in effect until further notice and will apply to all program buildings in Window Rock, Crownpoint, and Aneth.

Speaker Damon’s directive also stated: “Offices are to be closed and signs posted on all doors explaining that buildings are closed until further notice. Information pertaining to contact information will be posted on all entrances and voice messages are to be altered to reflect these changes.”

The closure of program offices follows preemptive measures implemented over the past week. The Navajo Nation has been receiving COVID-19 updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Navajo Nation Department of Health and the Navajo Area Office Indian Health Service. On Thursday, the Legislative Branch implemented travel advisories and restrictions that resulted in several staff and council delegates returning from off-reservation travel to self-isolate out of caution.

Last week, program supervisors were directed to submit remote work plans to ensure program activities continued through the closure of public buildings. As of Wednesday, Speaker Damon also confirmed that employees of the Legislative Branch covered by remote work plans would be issued administrative leave with pay during the COVID-19 response period.

Speaker Damon also directed Wednesday morning that the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee special meeting at the Department of Diné Education be instead conducted via teleconference. Under similar reductions in staff and building closures in the Executive Branch, the DODE building was closed early due to hour-by-hour assessments of the COVID-19 situation.

The teleconferencing protocols were allowed on Monday’s Special Session of the Navajo Nation Council through emergency legislation. Navajo Nation Council Resolution No. CMA-04-20 waived the requirement that council delegates attend official meetings through teleconference and alternative communication methods. This action allowed council delegates observing a self-isolation period to participate remotely.

Speaker Damon said, “The health and safety of our elders, our communities, Navajo Nation employees and their relatives are of the highest concern right now, especially at the outset of any potential widespread transmission to COVID-19.”

Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, coughing, and shortness of breath, should take special care to ensure testing at any of the Navajo Nation’s health care facilities is conducted. Before entering a medical facility, anyone presenting COVID-19 symptoms should call that facility to notify them in advance so that medical staff can prepare. The general public should be taking greater precautions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, which can be lethal to anyone with weakened immune systems to fight the virus.

The following numbers may be utilized to contact health care services in and around the Navajo Nation:

- Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility: (928) 674-7001/7688
- Crownpoint Health Care Facility: (505) 786-5291/6381
- Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Board: (928) 729-8000
- Gallup Indian Medical Center: (505) 722-1000
- Sage Memorial Hospital: (928) 755-4500
- Kayenta Health Center: (928) 697-4000
- Northern Navajo Medical Center: (505) 368-6001
- Tuba City Regional Health Care Center: (866) 976-5941
- Utah Navajo Health System: (866) 976-5941
- Winslow Indian Health Care Center: (928) 289-4646
- Arizona Poison Control System (for testing, isolation, quarantine): 1-844-542-8201
- New Mexico Coronavirus Hotline: (855) 600-3453

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