



24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

HONORABLE SETH DAMON
Speaker, 24th Navajo Nation Council

March 26, 2021

Honorable Jonathan Nez, President
Office of the President and Vice President
Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona)

Honorable Myron Lizer, Vice President
Office of the President and Vice President
Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona)

To the Honorable Jonathan Nez and the Honorable Myron Lizer:

First, I wish to extend my gratitude and deepest appreciation, on behalf of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, to the Office of the President and Vice President for continuing to provide leadership for the Navajo People during this coronavirus pandemic. Your admirable service has brought national attention to the issues and challenges facing the Navajo Nation.

As the Navajo People begin to return to a pattern of life under fewer restrictions, the Navajo Nation government faces the challenge of returning to full operation. What have we learned and how can policy be improved?

As policymakers, we hope to begin the first step in this reflective and planning discussion process on Monday, at the Naabik'íyáti' Committee work session for branch chiefs. This will begin the conversations that will lay the foundation for spending American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) relief funds for the benefit of the Navajo People.

These work sessions provide the most transparent and the most unadulterated presentation of the act of collaboration within the Navajo Nation government.

It is this same process that will benefit from your positive guidance, whether the Navajo Nation Council decides to approve immediate allocations or to enact program reforms before funding further ARPA projects. Ultimately, initiatives relating to fiscal policy and investments in the health and wellbeing of the Navajo People are for them to decide through the Council, first.

During this public health crisis, the Navajo Nation Council has worked endlessly to serve the Navajo People through its actions and its oversight hearings.

Our votes, as leadership, in these appropriations are for the enhancement of basic human services. These immediate needs include proposed appropriations to:

1. Navajo Nation Veterans Administration. Under guidance from agency commanders and the families of Navajo veterans, the members of the Navajo Nation Council acknowledge that the appropriation of funding to meet the emergency and housing needs of Navajo veterans is among the most basic dignities we can afford to them. The Council seeks continual improvement in this area.
2. Navajo Nation Criminal Investigations. Monthly, the record shows a deficiency in this program that will be enhanced with targeted supplemental funding approved by the Council. This appropriation will represent the culmination of more than a year of hearings and reports by Executive Branch personnel to the Council membership. Public safety potentially stands to realize crucial improvements in its services under ARPA funds, beginning with Criminal Investigations.
3. Burial Assistance Funding. Leadership and the public has perceived a need in this area that has been the focus of an ongoing discussion throughout the pandemic. The need persists and we stand ready to present this appropriation at the time the Council approves it.

As with the process initiated during the CARES Act appropriations, I extend the invitation to you to be an active and frequent participant in the open and public decision-making that is undertaken by the Navajo Nation Council.

Further, we look forward to receiving further information on the concerns alluded to in your letter and any proposals the Navajo Nation Council may consider as a matter of public record.

Current and future legislation addressing the aforementioned appropriations are open for public comment and action. Your active solicitation of the Navajo public's input on these measures is welcomed through the legislative process.

The Office of the Speaker remains open to any and all collaborative and constructive proposals for the critical needs of the Navajo People.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seth Damon', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Honorable Seth Damon, Speaker
24th Navajo Nation Council