



## Navajo Nation Council applauds the confirmation of Debra Haaland to Interior Secretary

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PHOTO: US Department of the Interior Secretary Debra A. Haaland.

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo leaders gave the following statements after the United States Senate voted Monday to confirm former-Representative Debra Haaland to Secretary of the US Department of the Interior.

Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Łichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) said: "The Senate's confirmation today of Congresswoman Debra Haaland to lead the US Department of the Interior demonstrates progress for all Tribal Nations and is a milestone in United States history. Throughout the past few weeks, the entire country has heard how Haaland worked across party lines to build common understanding and to pass strong legislation. Her voice in Congress will be missed, but under the Biden-Harris Administration, we look forward to a new approach by the Federal Government to listening directly to the Navajo People and all Tribal Communities."

Council Delegate Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock) said: "Today, Indian Country is witnessing history in the making. Congresswoman Deb Haaland has been appointed the first American Indian to lead the Department of Interior and is also the first American Indian to hold a position in any President's Cabinet. It is certainly a win-win for Indian Country and an honor to

know that such an important position is being headed, not only by an American Indian, but an American Indian woman, who has lived the life that many of us have lived. Ms. Haaland understands the reservation life, how many of us continue to have no running water, no electricity, minimal broadband connection, bad roads, and the fight to protect our natural resources. As a Delegate for the Navajo Nation, I look forward to working with Ms. Haaland and being at the table, working to address the much needed services that our tribal communities have been advocating for these past 100 years.”

Haaland’s confirmation follows her nomination by President Joseph Biden in February. She is the first person of Native American descent to be nominated and confirmed to the position of interior secretary.

Navajo leaders discussed supporting Haaland’s confirmation in recent weeks at the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee of the Navajo Nation Council. Council delegates examined Haaland’s public positions and acknowledged ongoing land and resource issues that require the involvement of the US DOI.

“The Navajo Nation recognizes this historic moment and we thank President Biden, Vice President Harris and our US Senators for supporting the first American Indian-Native American to this important Cabinet position. Seeing and hearing of Haaland’s bipartisan approach in Congress gives us the assurance that she’ll be well-suited to listening to both or all sides of issues important to the Navajo Nation and Navajo communities,” said Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta).

Alongside Haaland’s nomination and confirmation process, the Navajo Nation began considering new legislation establishing the formal positions of the Navajo Nation on current federal policies.

The legislation, No. 0024-21, asserts Navajo Nation tribal sovereignty, supports additional Covid-19 relief, outlines specific regulatory concerns, continues veterans advocacy, establishes federal public safety recommendations and other key federal issues. Each of the 21 proposed positions on federal policy areas includes the direct and indirect involvement of at least one of the US DOI’s agencies.

The Navajo Nation Code gives the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee the sole power to establish the Navajo Nation’s official position on the Navajo People’s behalf regarding state and federal legislation and policymaking. That process is carried out under the Navajo Nation legislative process, which includes public comment, discussion, and opportunities for amendment by Council delegates before a final vote on the legislation.

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