



Navajo leaders recognize signing of New Mexico law ending Impact Aid credits in public education funding rules

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) Chair Daniel Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor) and the 24th Navajo Nation Council gave supporting statements on the signing of New Mexico House Bill 6 by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday.

The measure changes the way federal public education funding is distributed to school districts located in areas that include federal land. Federal Impact Aid is available for public school districts, like those on the Navajo Nation, that include enrolled Native American children and similarly impacted populations.

“The long road to get the New Mexico Legislature and Governor Grisham to realize the intricacies of Impact Aid has been arduous. Many times, Navajo and Tribal leadership came up on downright opposition at the Roundhouse. The determined effort of many leaders, school board members and educators to climb this steep political mesa proved that this measure to correct an inequity in public school finance is the right decision. Historic, momentous and celebratory is just a tic of the clock, and we know the real rewards will be harvested by the students. Equity for marginalized school districts, their students and their families is the battle worth fighting for. This is the day we’ve waited for,” said Tso.

The State of New Mexico, under the prior law, established a federally-approved distribution method that kept many impacted school districts from receiving adequate funding. The state’s ‘equalization formula’ for Impact Aid funding has been frequently challenged by Navajo leaders.

Governor Grisham’s action on Monday ends the decades-long use of federal Impact Aid provisions that diverted funding from the most impacted local school districts to the state under the formula.

“Monday’s action will help Navajo school districts boost the academic performance of Navajo students,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). “We thank the New Mexico Legislature and Governor Grisham for taking this step and for clearing the way for future progress in the state’s public education system. Impact Aid touches so many of the Navajo Nation’s communities in New Mexico and it is good to see the system of public school financing changing to reflect the true needs of our students and their families.”

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