



## Navajo Nation Council Approves Phase II of Hardship Assistance for Remaining Tribal Members

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 29, 2021

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — The Budget & Finance Committee (BFC) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council received a report from the acting Navajo Nation Controller, Elizabeth Begay, on the status of applicants who did not receive financial assistance from the Navajo CARES Act Hardship Fund Assistance Program last year.

“We want to keep a transparent line of communication with the people as BFC receives the report from the acting controller in order to understand the challenges our people are facing,” said Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’áłnáoozt’íí, Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gad’ii’áhi/Tó Ko’i).

Begay informed the Navajo Nation Council that out of the \$361,508,000 allocated to the hardship program, \$319,532,000 has been expended on approximately 308,000 enrolled members.

However, due to the change in the Navajo Nation’s enrollment count to 399,494 members, around 90,000+ members have yet to receive hardship assistance with a remaining balance of \$41,979,377 to be allocated to them.

Out of those 90,000+ members, approximately 1,000 applicants who met the original Nov. 30th deadline did not provide necessary documents, like their C.I.B., to qualify to receive assistance. Additionally, about 9,000 applicants who missed the deadline have been placed on the waitlist.

The remaining 80,000+ members are those who did not apply for the hardship fund assistance.

Begay expressed her concern that the remaining balance would not accommodate the 90,000+ enrolled members. However, with various council delegates sponsored Legislation No. 0094-21, which enacts the Navajo Nation Cares Fund Phase II Hardship Assistance, all 90,000+ members would receive financial assistance.

“Our relatives who had challenges with their paperwork are left in the dark and it is up to leadership to make sure they can access these funds through legislation,” said Crotty.

Crotty — along with four other council delegates — expressed community members’ concerns and questions over the inability to check on their application statuses through the hardship hotline as they are waiting on the funds to pay bills and expenses.

However, Baker Tilly, the contractor that was assigned to oversee the portal and call center put their services and records on hold due to the expiration of the contract coming to a close in September 2021.

“There’s folks from my area that are really inquiring and keep inquiring with me as I speak right now asking when they will be given an answer,” said BFC Vice-Chair, Raymond Smith Jr. (Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Houck, Lupton, Nahat’á Dziil).

As of Tuesday, the Office of the Controller has been able to retrieve those applicant’s information from the contractor, Baker Tilly.

On Friday, June 25, 2021, the 24th Navajo Nation Council voted to approve Legislation No. 0094-21 with a vote of 23 in favor and 0 opposed during a special session meeting. The legislation would grant those eligible Navajos who timely submitted their applications for Navajo CARES Act Hardship Fund Assistance Program, along with the necessary documents needed.

Those enrolled members shall be awarded funding that is comparable to the amount awarded to other Navajo Nation members who received the \$1,350 assistance check for adults and \$450 for kids.

If those enrolled members do not apply within 30-days after Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez signs and approves the legislation, then the legislation offers them to reapply under the Phase II Hardship Fund Assistance Program which utilizes the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

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