



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL  
Office of the Speaker

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## Navajo Nation Council Questions Lack of Collaboration from the Washington Office & President Jonathan Nez

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 9, 2021



PHOTO: The U.S. Capitol during a recent visit with Congressional leaders and Council Delegates in Washington, D.C.

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. —** Speaker Seth Damon and members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council continue to encounter resistance from the Navajo Nation Washington Office (NNWO) and the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP). The lack of recognition from President Jonathan Nez for the laws created by the Legislative Branch is cause for concern.

Yesterday, President Jonathan Nez along with other tribal leaders, joined President Joe Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to sign a proclamation restoring protections for Bears Ears National Monument.

“It concerns us that the Navajo Nation Washington Office did not consult or meet with the Navajo Nation Council about this historic moment,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Łichíí, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). “President Nez and the Washington Office closed the lines of communication with the Council which directly impacts our Navajo people. Without a unified voice on national issues - the land, water, and livelihood of our people are left unprotected.”

In 2019, the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee of the Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Resolution No. NABIJY-41-19 to support congressional legislation that would expand the boundaries of the sacred site.

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As the governing body, the Navajo Nation Council drafts and approves legislation on behalf of 110 chapter governments and the Navajo people. The actions taken on the council floor allows the OPVP to publicly advocate for historic moments such as the restorative protection for Bears Ears National Monument.

“The Washington Office works for all three branches of the Navajo government. We should have one voice that advocates for the people to Congress and the White House,” said Madam Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock). “As Council Delegates, we feel disrespected when the Washington Office and President Nez block us from important moments like yesterday. A \$100,000 bathroom renovation for the Washington Office seems more important to them. There must be respect for the government-to-government relationship bestowed to the Council by the people.”

The lack of leadership from the Office of the President and Vice President highlights the inability of the Executive Branch to effectively collaborate with the Legislative Branch. From line-item vetos, unsigned legislation, and incomplete budget forms – all are actions of a President that is disconnected.

“This historic day to protect Shásh Jaa’ should have been shared with the Navajo Nation Council,” said Chair Daniel Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreón, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor) “Such actions only diminish the totality of the Navajo Nation’s commitment to protecting sacred places. The Council took bold and unanimous action to protect Shásh Jaa’ from the beginning. With only President Nez appearing at this momentous historical event signifies a lack of shared governance for the largest sovereign nation in the United States.”

The 24th Navajo Nation Council will host its Fall Session from Oct. 18 to 22, 2021, and receive the State of the Nation Address from the Executive Branch.

“We will continue to utilize Nitsáhakees (thinking), Nahat’á (planning), liná (action) and Siihásin (reflection) to make important legislative decisions to protect the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation,” said Speaker Seth Damon.

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