



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Navajo Nation Council approves \$557 Million for Second Hardship Assistance Checks for the Navajo People

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PHOTO: The Navajo Nation Council Chambers during the 2021 Winter Session in Window Rock, Ariz.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Yesterday, the 24th Navajo Nation Council passed Emergency Legislation No. 0263-21 with an amendment allocating \$557,000,000 million of Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Funds (NNFRF) to send a second hardship assistance check for over 345,000 qualified Navajo people. Speaker Seth Damon appointed Madam Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton to serve as Pro Tem Speaker for the special session hosted virtually in Window Rock, Ariz.

The Office of the Controller (OOC) will provide financial hardship assistance, directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, for eligible Navajo people age 18 and over not to exceed \$2,000 per applicant for up to 250,000 qualifying individuals.

“It has been over 8 months since President Joe Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act and our Navajo people should not suffer another day without knowing how their government will assist them as they suffer from grief, mental health and financial hardship. We have all been affected by the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and the people appreciate their Council Delegates standing up for them now. A second allocation of hardship assistance payments of \$2,000 per adult and \$600 per child will allow our relatives to purchase essential winter supplies like gasoline, firewood, and food now,” said Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’á’náoozt’i’i, Sheep Springs, Beclabito, Gad’ii’áhi/Tó Ko’i)

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Legislation No. 0263-21 also provides \$600 in hardship assistance to minors below 18 years old for up to 95,000 qualifying individuals. This financial assistance can be used to purchase personal protective equipment, pay utility bills, for rental and mortgage payments, and any educational related expenses for students.

“We must have compassion in our hearts and listen directly to the people who need immediate help. We have taken action now in the best interest of our grandmas, grandpas, our single parents, and our students who need support. Our intention is to provide direct relief to all families so they can simply pay for their water and electric bills, buy groceries, car payments, hay for livestock and more,” said Madam Chairwoman Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock).

Individuals do not have to reapply for the second allocation of hardship assistance payments. Any future check disbursements will follow the financial process previously approved by the Office of the Controller at: <https://www.nnooc.org/>

“If President Jonathan Nez signs this emergency legislation into law, the Navajo Nation Council will work with the Executive Branch to invest over \$577 million in direct hardship assistance checks to thousands of Navajo people. This is their money allocated for direct COVID-19 relief. Your Council Delegates have heard directly from our elders, parents, youth, and many community leaders who have been requesting immediate help all year. Utilize this assistance for home repairs, pay the water and utility bills, for college tuition costs, or save it for your future needs. We commend the leadership of Honorable Amber Kanazbah Crotty for being an outspoken champion for our elders, the young people, our single parent families, and the LGBTQ+ community,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

Two weeks ago, the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee just concluded a two-day work session with the Executive Branch to discuss Legislation No. 0257-21 allocating \$1.2 billion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the construction of over 10,000 infrastructure and economic development projects. This included the \$207 million for hardship assistance already agreed upon by the Executive Branch.

Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Dennehotso, Kayenta, Chííłchinbii’tó) said that the Navajo people have been hurt on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level from this monster called COVID-19. The emergency legislation will uplift the lives of so many vulnerable relatives, many of whom are homeless on the streets today. “This is the people’s money, and it should bring them each some sort of hope during troubling financial times. Understand that the Council has the best interests of our Navajo people in mind as we allocate all ARPA funds in a responsible way,” he added.

Earlier this year, the Navajo Nation received approximately \$2.1 billion in ARPA funds from the Biden Administration to respond to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Many of our Diné families need supplemental financial relief, especially those who live without running water or electricity. And for our relatives, many are students, who reside off the Navajo Nation who have high rental fees that exceed their cost of living. These ARPA funds belong to our people, their chapters, and their communities. Let them spend this money as they like, it is theirs, and the Navajo government is now acting on their behalf,” said Council Delegate Charlaime Tso (Mexican Water, Tółıkan, Teec Nos Pos, Aneth, Red Mesa).

Additional answers to questions regarding new hardship assistance payments will be made available in the near future by the OOC.

Resources and Development Chairman Rickie Nez (T'iistsoh Sikaad, Nenahnezad, Upper Fruitland, Tsé Daa K'aan, Newcomb, San Juan) applauded the historic action taken by the Navajo Nation Council by passing the legislation. "The outcry from our Navajo people needing immediate assistance was loud and clear. We did the right thing today for hundreds of families," he added.

Emergency Legislation No. 0263-21 was passed by the Navajo Nation Council by a vote of 18 in favor, 2 opposed. Pro Tem Speaker Eugenia Charles-Newton has 10 days after the session to certify the legislation. Following this process, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez has 10 days to approve or veto the bill.

The Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Fund Office has created a website to share all ARPA updates and information for the public at: www.NavajoNationARPA.org

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