



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Navajo Nation expresses disappointment with the United States Postal Service and the Violation of Voting Rights

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PHOTO: Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. speaking during a signing ceremony hosted at the Navajo DOT.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — In November, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee (NABI) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council passed Resolution No. NABIN-47-21 that requests the United States Postal Service (USPS) to present a written and oral report concerning the state of postal services at 110 chapter governments and how such postal services will be upgraded under the 'Delivering for America USPS Ten Year Plan.'

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. sponsored the resolution that was passed by a vote of 20 in favor and 0 opposed. Since 2019, he has been advocating for the construction of permanent post offices that operate on weekends in the communities of Many Farms, Tselani/Cottonwood, and Low Mountain, Arizona.

"The Navajo Nation continues to express its disappointment in the lack of tribal consultation or response from the United States Postal Service to address our concerns," said Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain). "Many Navajo homes are unmarked and lack formal street addresses. This creates a situation where our people must rely on post office boxes and pay over \$80 annually in fees. If box holders

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cannot pay, then our people have no access to daily mail, to monthly checks, and their ballots - which violates their voting rights. The federal government has a legal obligation outlined in the U.S. Constitution and the Navajo Treaty of 1868 to provide us equal access to all postal services.”

According to reports from the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (NNHRC), registered Navajo voters pay \$20 for fuel to travel to a chapter house and then a state polling location to vote. Most post offices have limited box availability, are often shared within families, and require traveling significant distances to access mail.

“The voting experience of our Navajo people is completely different to other tribal nations or the metropolitan areas in Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). “Post offices on the Navajo Nation are often located in rural areas that require a long commute, creating problems for many families. There are not enough mailboxes to serve entire communities and adding a critical shortage of postal service providers. The United States has to honor its trust responsibility to Indian Country while the USPS must respect the growing concerns shared by our 110 chapter governments.”

In April and May, official letters from Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Representative Tom O’Halloran (D-AZ) were sent to U.S. Postal Service District Manager, Mr. John Morgan, requesting the immediate establishment of a post office in the Many Farms community.

To share more on restoring the Voting Rights Act and protecting the Native American and Alaska Native vote in the United States, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez provided testimony in October to the Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on the Constitution.

“Protecting the Native American vote requires taking into consideration the unique challenges faced by Navajo voters. The Nation has, and continues, to fight repeated efforts by the states and their political subdivisions through restrictive voting laws and policies that try their best to impede access to the polls. The Navajo Nation cannot fully rely on states to provide protections to our right to vote. Eligible voters on the Nation should not face hardship in registering to vote, receiving important voting information, or casting their ballot. More locations on the Nation that can provide Navajo voters with voting-related services would alleviate some of these hardships. The Nation welcomes regular tribal consultation with the Postmaster General to address the mail barriers faced by Navajo voters,” said President Jonathan Nez.

In July, the U.S. Postal Service announced a 10-year plan to achieve “financial sustainability and service excellence.” It plans to invest \$40 billion over the next ten years and boost the scale of their service quality and package deliveries across the country.

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