



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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HEHSC Chairperson Vince James addresses Navajo health priorities at the Indian Health Services FY2026 Budget Formulation Tribal Consultation



PHOTO: HEHSC Chair Vince James called on Congress to continue advanced appropriations to help IHS plan and execute long-term health initiatives.

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz. - Today, Council Delegate Vince James (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat), Chairperson of the 25th Navajo Nation Council's Health, Education, Human Services Committee, delivered Tribal Leader Remarks at the Navajo Area Indian Health Service (IHS) Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Formulation Tribal Consultation held at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort.

The session provided an opportunity for tribal leaders to discuss the future of the Navajo Area IHS and to voice budgetary priorities. Chair James expressed gratitude for the \$5.13 billion advance appropriations allocated to the IHS in the fiscal year 2023 Omnibus Spending Bill, a move that he said has significantly improved the healthcare landscape for tribal communities.

"We urge Congress to continue this practice of advance appropriations in future spending bills. This allows the IHS to plan and execute long-term health initiatives effectively," Chair James said.

The call for mandatory funding for IHS was also reaffirmed. Chair James stressed the need for Congress to make IHS funding mandatory, protecting it from the uncertainties of annual

approvals and ensuring consistent, uninterrupted healthcare services for communities.

He also spoke about the modernization of IHS Infrastructure. Many IHS facilities currently need improvements in the areas of equipment and staffing. “We recommend that Congress and IHS authorize funds specifically for modernizing and expanding our healthcare infrastructure. This will ensure the delivery of comprehensive and culturally appropriate care to our people,” he said.

Investing in Public Health Infrastructure was another critical point that he raised. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of the Navajo Nation’s public health infrastructure. Chair James called for investments that would prepare and equip the Navajo Nation for future health emergencies.

He also advocated for resources to support Extended Care funding and long-term care. Historically, these have been neglected and left unfunded in the IHS Budget, which is a disservice to the Navajo people and the aging populations of other indigenous communities who rely on IHS for healthcare needs.

Chair James called for investments in mental health services and emphasized the Navajo Nation’s launch of Operation Rainbow Bridge, which responded to the closure of fraudulent rehabilitation facilities in Arizona and continues to assist Diné relatives who were victims. This underscored the need for in-house services that ensure culturally based care rooted in traditional Navajo customs and traditions.

“We seek support to address these critical issues. Providing ample resources and flexibility to tribal nations which will empower them to design and administer healthcare programs that meet their needs,” Chair James said.

25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley was also in attendance at the consultation and spoke about Navajo health priorities that need to be supported through the Navajo Area IHS FY26 Budget.

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