



# STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION ADDRESS

NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT DR. BUU NYGREN

APRIL 20, 2026

Madam Speaker and Honorable Delegates of the 25<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council, Madam Chief Justice, Madam Vice President, visiting dignitaries, distinguished guests, and my Navajo people, *Yá'át'ééh!*

I am happy to be with you at this Spring Session in our final year of my Administration and the 25<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council.

I begin with congratulating Dr. Deborah Jackson-Dennison. She is Diné College's new President and was installed just last week. I also congratulate Dr. Shelly Lowe who was installed as the President of the Institute of American Indian last month. Our Navajo women are leading the way in tribal colleges and I couldn't be prouder! I am also happy that our tribal colleges are thriving. Last month, Navajo Technical University held its grand opening for its new academic building.

I am happy to report that we have had another strong quarter.

## **NAVAJO NATION CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCING FUND CREATED**

On February 21, I signed Resolution CJA-05-26 into law, enacting the Navajo Nation Capital Development and Financing Act, which moves approximately \$521 million from the Revenue Replacement Reserve (RRR) to establish the new Capital Development Financing Fund.

This landmark resolution positions the Navajo Nation to make transformative investments in critical infrastructure and long-term development. An additional \$166.7 million will remain in the RRR to support Delegate Region Project Plans that are approved or pending approval.

The Navajo Nation can leverage this new fund to secure financing for major high-priority capital projects, including water and wastewater systems, roads and transportation infrastructure, energy and utility infrastructure, affordable housing, government facilities, and other major development projects to improve the quality of life for our Diné people.

I am very proud of this new Fund. Controller Sean McCabe and I began discussing the idea of this type of Fund long before I ran for President. **Through challenges and change, we have remained committed to a shared vision – building a stronger future for the Nation.** That future begins with bold and radical revision and reform of our financial management system. Sean and I are working hard together to modernize the Navajo Nation's financial management system.

## **RADICALLY REVISING THE PROCUREMENT SYSTEM**

While this did technically occur in the third quarter of FY2026, and not the second quarter, this is so important to report that I did not want to wait for the next State of the Nation

Last Friday, I signed into law Resolution CMA-22-26. Together, the Council and I have created a radically new procurement system. I must note that the new system will not take effect until the Budget and Finance Committee issues regulations. As such, I have directed the Navajo Nation Department of Justice (NNDOJ) to issue guidance on the procurement process that currently exists. This will guide us and ensure continuity while the Budget and Finance Committee works with Controller McCabe and the NNDOJ on new regulations. NNDOJ plans to issue that guidance today.

I thank the Office of the Controller, the Department of Justice, the Budget and Finance Committee, and the Navajo Nation Council for coming together to draft and adopt Resolution CMA-22-26. Controller McCabe has reported to me that this Resolution will improve and speed up our procurement process. Controller McCabe has also reported he needs this new procurement process to align with his design of the new financial and procurement management software. This new software is helping us modernize the Nation's financial management system.

The Nation will become more transparent as we continue to modernize our processes. When we do that, we will be able to better work with and support our Navajo small businesses here on the Nation.

## **SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES**

The Navajo Small Business Credit Initiative is making a tangible difference for our community's entrepreneurs. This federally funded program provides loans from \$5,000 to \$20 million to support Navajo-owned businesses, nonprofits, and enterprises in the starting, growing phase, and it is creating jobs.

Since launching, over \$600,000 has already been deployed through Change Labs, directly helping Navajo businesses expand, hire, and invest in their operations. These funds are already fueling economic growth, enabling local entrepreneurs to bring their ideas to life and strengthen our community.

The Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development is working with three lending partners—Change Labs, Trans Pecos Bank, and First Southwest Bank—to connect business owners with these opportunities. With \$28.1 million in initial funding and more to come, there is a real chance for Navajo businesses to access the capital they need to thrive.

With less than two years remaining to utilize these funds, now is the time to take action. Interested business owners should reach out to the participating lenders or contact the Navajo Division of Economic Development to learn more about the application process.

## **RURAL ADDRESSING IS STARTING TO BECOME A REALITY**

ARPA-funded rural addressing planning is ongoing. Public Safety Director Henderson and SDR, Inc. report that several Chapters are expected to receive new road and street signs soon:

- Churchrock with 879 housing units
- Whiterock with 43 housing units
- Sweetwater with 644 homes
- Many Farms with more than 1,300 address points
- Sawmill with 376 address points
- Klagetoh with over 420 address points
- Houck with 510 address points
- Naschitti with more than 325 address points

Inscription House, Upper Fruitland, and Crownpoint Chapters have each received address number signs for structures, but installation is still pending. Houck received its road and street sign materials in the first quarter of FY2026, and installation is nearly complete, with the exception of areas along Interstate 40 due to right-of-way clearance requirements. Sawmill's sign installation is currently in progress, with remaining work in the White Clay area. Significant challenges confront Shiprock and its rural addressing. I have asked my staff to assist to ensure rural addressing is quickly rolled out in Shiprock.

Progress has been slowed by ongoing staffing challenges. Individual Chapters must hire and train Local Rural Addressing Committee (LRAC) technicians to install signs, which has consistently been a barrier for DCD-NAAD. Many Farms continues to advance its rural addressing project and is working closely with NAAD for guidance. SDR has identified 27 new road and street signs, while LRAC is currently working on nearly 100 roadway centerlines. SDR will also assist DCD in managing the growing volume of data on behalf of Chapters after December 2026.

Continued on-the-ground support is still needed to assist Chapters with implementation. These concerns have been shared with RDC, highlighting the immediate need for additional labor to keep projects moving forward.

## **CHAPTER PROJECTS**

### **CPMD Expands Weekly Support Sessions to Accelerate Chapter Projects Across the Navajo Nation**

The Capital Projects Management Department (CPMD) continues to strengthen support for chapter projects by hosting weekly online support sessions every Wednesday from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. These sessions are designed to assist chapters in advancing New Mexico Capital Outlay and SÍhásin-funded projects, ensuring timely use of funds while providing a space for guidance and collaboration.

Participants can access the meeting link by visiting [www.nndcd.org](http://www.nndcd.org) and navigating to the "Upcoming Events" page. Each session focuses on addressing project challenges, sharing updates, and facilitating real-time questions and answers with CPMD staff.

Since launching the initiative, CPMD has seen strong engagement, with eight chapters consistently participating. The department aims to build on this momentum by expanding access and accommodating additional schedules. To better serve chapter officials and staff, CPMD will introduce an additional evening session beginning at 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. This new time option is intended to provide greater flexibility for those unable to attend during regular business hours.

CPMD remains committed to supporting chapters in successfully planning, executing, and completing critical infrastructure and community development projects across the Navajo Nation.

I encourage all of our Chapter Officials to reach out to CPMD.

## **INVESTMENT IN BROADBAND**

### **We celebrated ribbon cutting of a new broadband tower in Nazlini.**

This project marks a significant step toward closing the digital divide across the Navajo Nation by delivering reliable broadband and wireless service to Nazlini, a community long considered off the grid. Through partnerships with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Choice Broadband, and federal agencies, the tower expands access to essential communication services.

### **Navajo Nation secured \$150 million Broadband Investment from Arizona BEAD Program**

I met with the Arizona Commerce Authority at the beginning of this month to discuss the initial successes of the U.S. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program in partnership with the State of Arizona. The Nation has been awarded nearly \$150 million, one of the largest single allocations to any tribal nation in the country

as part of Arizona's broader broadband investment strategy. This funding represents a critical step toward closing the digital divide and ensuring that Navajo families have access to reliable, high-speed internet.

We are grateful to the State of Arizona and Governor Katie Hobbs for their leadership and commitment to ensuring our communities are not left behind. This investment gives us a real opportunity to connect our people—whether through fiber, fixed wireless, or satellite and bring essential services directly into our homes.

The project is expected to connect 17,000 homes and community anchor institutions across the Navajo Nation, making it one of the largest broadband expansion efforts in the state. Navajo Nation's award accounts for roughly one-third of Arizona's total BEAD funding, underscoring both the scale of need and the significance of this investment.

Broadband access is a necessity to support education, healthcare, economic development, and public safety. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Navajo students and families were forced to travel long distances or sit outside public buildings just to access internet services. This investment aims to ensure that those challenges become a thing of the past.

Construction is expected to begin as early as this year!

### **FOREST CARBON OFFSETS**

We are now seeing the benefits of work that began under the administration of President Ben Shelly. During that time, the Navajo Nation started to investigate the California Cap-and-Trade Program's United States Forest Offset Projects. The previous Council passed the necessary resolution to move this effort forward. I am happy to report this past quarter that we have received revenue from the sale of credits under the Program. We have received over \$8.3 million. We anticipate receiving tens of millions more over the next couple of years.

### **FY2027 BUDGET**

I respectfully request that the Navajo Nation plan the FY2027 consistent with existing law, which is the Appropriations Act. The FY2026 General Budget planning process was a failure leaving both the Executive Branch and Judicial Branch underfunded. This has resulted in this Council having to pass multiple resolutions or amendments to fund both branches. The Appropriations Act calls upon us to budget upon projections.

### **WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENTS**

As we work to strengthen our financial planning and ensure more responsible budgeting moving forward, we must also remain focused on securing the Nation's long-term resources—especially water. The Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement was introduced in this Congress in S. 953 and H.R. 2025.

I testified before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on March 12 along with Hopi Chairman Keevama, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe Vice-President Lehi Jr, and Acting Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation Scott Cameron. The hearing went very well with Senators Murkowski, Schatz, and Lujan raising thoughtful questions.

The Trump Administration expressed qualified support for the settlement noting concerns about overall costs. In response, our technical staff is actively reviewing those concerns and meeting regularly with the Navajo Nation Water Rights Negotiation Team—including several Delegates—to identify a path forward with the Administration.

I remain hopeful that Congress will pass the settlement act this year. As the Council knows—and it bears repeating—this historic agreement resolves all of the Navajo Nation's water rights claims in Arizona. It includes water in the Upper and Lower Basins of the Colorado River, the Little Colorado River Basin, the Gila River Basin, and groundwater resources. Most importantly, it affirms and quantifies substantial, enforceable water rights for the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

### **CONCLUSION**

We have come a long way over the past three years. We are working hard to modernize our financial management system, have radically revised the procurement process, have built hundreds of homes, installed thousands of lines of water lines, installed tens upon tens of cistern systems, are improving major wastewater treatment centers across the Navajo Nation, addressing roads and potholes, and entered into a settlement for all of our water rights in the State of Arizona.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Council, thank you very much.

