

OCTOBER 21, 2019

PRESIDENT JONATHAN NEZ  
VICE PRESIDENT MYRON LIZER



# STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION ADDRESS

2019 FALL NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL SESSION





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## WELCOME ADDRESS

# President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer



Yáát'ééh to the honorable members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Speaker Seth Damon, Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne, as well as chapter, county, state, and federal leaders, and most importantly our Diné Citizens. On behalf of the Nez-Lizer Administration, we are pleased to present to you the State of the Navajo Nation Address for the 2019 Fall Council Session.

Having been in office for nine months, the Nez-Lizer Administration's "Hozhó Diné bi Nahat'á" document continues to drive our work and commitment for the Navajo People. This document, based on the priorities of the Navajo People, continues to guide our administration's divisions, departments, and programs to serve our people and our communities. More than ever before, we remain committed to working together with the Council, Judicial Branch, Chapters, and many others to bring positive change for our Navajo people and communities.

As we have previously stated, our administration believes that change presents an opportunity – the opportunity to work together to strengthen and empower our people and our communities through the teaching we know as, "T'áá hwó' ajit'éego," or self-reliance and self-determination. The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to reinforce this teaching throughout the Navajo Nation, particularly among our young people.

To create change and better the lives of our people, we need to believe in ourselves individually, collectively, and at the government level, to become truly self-reliant and to determine our own future. T'áá hwó' ajit'éego is a critical teaching that our administration continues to promote and practice.

As we approach the Winter Season, let us work together to prepare our people for the cold weather and all of the challenges that come with it. Last year, our administration worked proactively to caution our people and to issue a declaration of emergency in advance of winter snowstorms that eventually led to flooding and heavy mud in many of our communities. It is incumbent upon us to remind our people, chapters, and others to prepare ahead of time to ensure that our children, elders, and disabled are taken care of this Winter Season.

In the following State of the Navajo Nation Address, we provide an overview of several recent achievements and the ongoing progress of other initiatives. We understand that we cannot create change and move our Nation forward on our own, we need the partnership and support of the 24th Navajo Nation Council and many others to do so.

We once again thank 24th Navajo Nation Council for your hard work, leadership, and support. We assure you that the Nez-Lizer Administration will continue working with you to create a better future for all of our people. God bless each of you, and God bless our great Navajo Nation!

# Comprehensive Budget Reform

Thank you to the 24th Navajo Nation Council for working together with the Nez-Lizer Administration to pass a Comprehensive Budget in September, and to Honorable Raymond Smith, Jr. for shepherding the bill through the Standing Committees and the Council. This is the first time in recent history that a budget has been passed with overwhelming support and without exercise of the presidential line-item veto authority. We thank you for supporting the Executive Branch's budget as proposed by our Division Directors and the Office of the President and Vice President.

In this year's budget, we would like to highlight several initiatives including a two-percent General Wage Adjustment for Navajo Nation employees, full funding for Chapter Official compensation, \$660,000 for the establishment of a Navajo Energy Office, an additional \$1 million for the Navajo Department of Aging and Long-Term Care Services for each of the five Navajo agency offices to help our elders, \$1.1 million for a new Navajo Veterans Administration office building, and nearly \$632,000 for the development of a gravel pit site, and \$250,000 for a lobbyist to push for the passage of the reauthorization of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.

The Nez-Lizer Administration recommends that we work together to explore the possibility of implementing a two-year budget rather than an annual budget for our Nation. A two-year budget will allow our employees to focus more time to providing direct services and developing and completing new initiatives rather than spending months out of each year developing budget proposals, attending budget hearings, and meetings related to the lengthy budget process. Having a two-year budget cycle may also allow for long-term financial certainty for departments, programs, and divisions under each branch of government.

We propose creating a work group comprised of budget experts from each branch of government to study the advantages and disadvantages of a two-year budget cycle and to put forth findings and recommendations for Navajo Nation leadership to consider.





# Yes to \$50 Million Scholarship Initiative

During the last campaign season, many of our Navajo people challenged candidates for public office to do more for our students by providing more scholarship opportunities. As we've spoken with more and more of our youth in many communities, we recognize that a growing number of our young people want to obtain their degrees and we know that the cost of tuition and living expenses continues to increase in most states. We understand that the cost of textbooks, rent, groceries, etc. adds up.

For these reasons, we began working with Honorable Kee Allen Begay, Jr. to develop Legislation No. 0238-19 to set aside \$50 million from the Síhasin Fund for scholarship opportunities. When the 22nd Navajo Nation Council held seven public hearings in 2014 to hear recommendations directly from the public as to how the funds from the Nation's \$554 million trust mismanagement litigation settlement should be used, scholarships ranked number one among the Navajo people followed by infrastructure. To date, the Nation has appropriated at least \$280 million from the Síhasin Fund for infrastructure and chapter projects, but we have yet to set-aside funds for scholarship opportunities.

If this proposal is successful, it will provide many scholarship opportunities for many years to come and help to bring our Navajo people home, but we need the support of our Navajo people to move this forward. Many of the students that we've spoken with want to return to the Navajo Nation after completing their degree, so with this proposal we want to include those opportunities for graduates to come home and serve their people in some capacity.

Working together we can also weigh options for developing a student loan forgiveness program based on a student's service to the Navajo Nation after obtaining their degree. This would relieve the financial burden of our students while also creating a path for graduates to return home and serve our Navajo people.

## INVEST IN OUR NAVAJO STUDENTS



*"It's quite apparent that our young people want more scholarship opportunities and resources. Many of the students that we've spoken with also want to return to the Navajo Nation after completing their degree, so with this proposal we want to include those opportunities for graduates to come home and serve their people in some capacity."*

- Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

**YES TO LEGISLATION 0238-19**  
**\$50 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS**





What will be different with this scholarship endowment is that we will require recipients of the scholarships to return home to the Navajo Nation to serve our people for a number of years once they earn their degree. This will provide a return on the Nation's investment and provide our young people with employment opportunities that provide great work experience while helping our people. We will also work with our Division Directors to create positions within our divisions so that when a scholarship recipient earns their degree, there will already be a position waiting for them when they return home to the Navajo Nation

Thank you to Honorable Kee Allen Begay, Jr. for sponsoring this bill through the legislative process. We are very grateful for the support of the Standing Committees and the Naabik'íyáti' Committee for the legislation and we ask the members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council to stand with our Navajo students by approving Legislation No. 0238-19 to invest in the future of our great Navajo Nation.



## Navajo Energy Initiatives

We are pleased that Legislation No. 0273-19 has been introduced by Honorable Rickie Nez, recognizing the Nez-Lizer Administration's initiative to create a Navajo Energy Office to advance energy initiatives for the Navajo Nation.

In April, the Nez-Lizer Administration issued the "Navajo Háyołkááł (Sunrise) Proclamation," stating that the Navajo Nation will pursue and prioritize renewable energy development for the long-term benefit of the Navajo people. The proclamation also created the Háyołkááł Work Group to focus on energy initiatives. Since then the work group, comprised of officials from the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Department of Justice, Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Economic Development, Division of Community Development, Navajo Nation Washington Office, and the Office of the President and Vice President, has been working diligently to vet proposals.



Working together with the Resources and Development Committee and other entities, the proposed Navajo Energy Office will be tasked with serving as the clearinghouse for energy proposals, initiatives, and projects. We greatly appreciate your support for funding of this office in the FY2020 Comprehensive Budget. We strongly believe that the Navajo Nation has the capacity and potential to be the energy leader in all of Indian Country.

With that in mind, we look forward to having a constructive dialogue regarding the Navajo Energy Policy. On May 28, 2019, we issued a letter to the 24th Navajo Nation Council outlining our recommendations for updating the 2013 Navajo Energy Policy, which included amending the policy as opposed to rescinding the policy, clarifying the phrase “move beyond coal source revenues,” recommending that the Division of Natural Resources be tasked to develop/create the Navajo Nation Energy Policy of 2019 as opposed to the Department of Justice as stated in the current legislation, clarifying the Navajo Nation EPA’s role, and more.

Regarding the use of transmission from the Navajo Generating Station, the Navajo Nation will be assigned the right to use 500 megawatts of transmission from the NGS substation effective December 23, 2019. The Division of Natural Resources along with the Department of Justice has been working diligently to put in place two items: a) Managing and Scheduling Entity; and b) the process for the use of the transmission.

Earlier this year, the Division of Natural Resources issued a request for proposals and TEA Solutions, Inc. (“TSI”) was selected as the managing and scheduling entity. TSI is a sister company to The Energy Authority (“TEA”) and are both wholly-owned and directed by non-profit, public power utilities. TEA is the largest non-profit energy trading and portfolio management organization in the country. There are several steps that need to occur prior to any trading and scheduling activities, the goal is to monetize the 500MW on day one on December 23, 2019. As we move forward in addressing the use of the 500MW, we will continue to work diligently to ensure the best use and benefits for the Nation.







## Shiprock Women and Children's Home

As we campaigned last year, we said time and time again that women and children's homes and assisted living centers were top priorities and we continue to prioritize these needs for the Navajo people. Recently, we visited the facility in Shiprock, New Mexico that was originally intended to be a home for women and children. Construction of this facility began years ago and has yet to be completed.

On October 4th, we met with Shiprock Chapter President Duane "Chili" Yazzie and New Mexico State Rep. Anthony Allison to discuss the feasibility of completing the construction of the idle facility to use as an assisted-living home for our Navajo elders. We also met with Navajo Housing Authority, Department of Justice, Division of Community Development, and the Division of Social Services to discuss the current status of the facility. On October 13th, by a vote of 47-0 the Shiprock Chapter passed a resolution supporting the use of the facility as an assisted-living center for our Navajo elders.

Based on these discussions and careful consideration of other factors, our administration supports completing the facility to use as an assisted-living home and elderly daycare center. While we understand and support the need for more homes for women and children, we are also mindful that the Nation recently purchased a women and children's home nearby in Blanding, Utah known as Gentle Ironhawk Shelter. The Division of Social Services, under the leadership of Deannah Neswood-Gishey, is actively working to get the shelter in full operation within the next few months. We believe this facility will be able to provide much-needed services for the Shiprock community and nearby residents.



As more and more of our family members and relatives grow older, there is an overwhelming and growing needs for assisted-living facilities on the Navajo Nation. By establishing the Shiprock facility as a home for Navajo elderly, there is great potential for creating high-paying jobs, self-sustaining operations, and we will be able to bring more of our Navajo grandparents home. We have many Navajo elderly who are currently in the care of facilities far from home in towns off the Navajo Nation. We see this as an opportunity to further build the community of Shiprock and providing a much-needed service for our Navajo elders.

Aside from the Shiprock facility, the Nez-Lizer Administration continues to seek other facilities throughout the Nation, including the communities of Bittersprings and Whippoorwill, that can serve as women and children's shelters as well as assisted-living homes for our elders.



## War On Diabetes

In September, the Nez-Lizer Administration officially declared the “War On Diabetes” to help bring an end to the diabetes epidemic on the Navajo Nation. “No More Diabetes on the Navajo Nation” is the message we delivered during every fair held this year on the Navajo Nation. Our message has received national attention and shed a positive light on the need for our people to become more active and live healthier lives. We love our Navajo people, and we want our people to live long and healthy lives – this is the message we deliver to our youth throughout the Navajo Nation.

All of the fruits and vegetables distributed by our team during each fair parade were purchased from local Navajo farmers and families rather than purchasing other items from non-Navajo businesses. Buy Navajo, Buy Local! Each year, programs and offices across each branch of government spend tens of thousands of dollars buying candy for parades – we are working to change that by supporting Navajo farmers and producers rather than spending those funds off the Navajo Nation. When we tell our people to eat healthy food and to exercise, then we distribute thousands of dollars’ worth of candy in parades, it sends mixed messages to our people. This is a movement to better the lives of our children, families, grandparents, and many others. We ask you to join us in the War On Diabetes!





## New Mexico's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force

We were pleased to announce earlier this month the appointment of Navajo Nation First Lady Phefelia Nez by New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham to serve on New Mexico's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force. In March, Gov. Grisham signed N.M. House Bill 278 into law to establish a task force to investigate the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the state of New Mexico.

In her new role, First Lady Nez will assist the task force in assessing and determining how to increase state resources for reporting and identifying victims. She will have the opportunity to work with state and federal officials, tribal members, and advocates to collaborate with tribal law enforcement agencies to identify barriers to improve the reporting, investigating, and data collection of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

First Lady and Second Lady Dottie Lizer will also work closely with the state of Arizona's study committee on missing and murdered Indigenous women to establish methods for collecting data, reviewing policies, practices, and prosecutorial practices, and identifying barriers to track violent crimes committed against Indigenous women and girls.

To move efforts forward, the Office of the President and Vice President has also established an internal workgroup known as the "Diné Nihik'éeí Nihíí' Násdłį́: Work Group, Reunite our Diné Relatives," led by First Lady Phefelia Nez and Second Lady Dottie Lizer, to address issues and concerns related to missing and murdered peoples and social ills impacting Navajo families, including Navajo men and boys. Most importantly, the focus is to heal, restore, and reunite Navajo families.



Our Navajo women are sacred and the center of our society. They offer love, comfort, and discipline; therefore, the Nez-Lizer Administration remains committed to making violence against women a top priority, as we continue to advocate for safety and justice for Navajo women and children.

The creation of the Diné Nihik'éei Nihíí' Násdlii' workgroup is a step forward for the protection and empowerment of Navajo families. First Lady and Second Lady will be hosting a summit to address efforts to restore balance, love, and harmony within Navajo families soon.



## Housing Manufacturing Facilities

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to partner with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters to develop housing manufacturing facilities on the Navajo Nation. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters is one of the country's largest building trades union with over a half-million members, including many members of the Navajo Nation. We had the opportunity to meet with several of the Navajo carpenter union members who shared personal stories of the benefits, professional development and training, and job opportunities they have gained through the program.

The union offers training and education through the Carpenters International Training Fund that is dedicated to job training and certification programs to increase the number of construction professionals with over 200 training facilities throughout the country. This is truly an opportunity to expand opportunities to benefit more of our Navajo people.

The ultimate goal is to develop housing manufacturing facilities on the Navajo Nation to build homes for veterans and



others, and to include a sweat-equity component that allows Navajo citizens and families to be a part of the construction of their homes. We have tasked Navajo Veterans Administration Acting Director Zwierlein to lead the effort to establish the housing manufacturing facilities, to provide high-quality homes that are built to last, in accordance with international building codes.

This is an exciting opportunity to begin building homes for our people here on the Navajo Nation rather than relying on outside resources and companies. We can build our Navajo workforce using the thousands of skilled Navajo workers who are currently working off the Navajo Nation – we can bring our people home.

In order for this housing initiative to succeed, it will require the support of the 24th Navajo Nation Council to provide funding to develop the manufacturing sites that can produce quality homes, including Navajo hogan-style designs with multiple rooms. Working together, we can build homes for thousands of Navajo families, veterans, elderly, disabled, and many others. We will present a funding proposal to the Council for the upcoming Winter Council Session.



## Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

In September, we announced that the Navajo Department of Health is accepting new and renewal applications for year 2020 in the Navajo Nation Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program until Dec. 2, 2019, for non-emergency medical transportation service providers within the Navajo Nation. The new NEMT permits for calendar year 2020 will be issued Jan. 1, 2020 and surrounding states will be notified.

Our administration has met with non-emergency medical transporters who brought forth various issues and concerns. We



evaluated these concerns to determine a solution that would benefit Navajo business owners and allow them to comply with requirements.

On August 19th, Navajo Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim issued a memorandum to AHCCS, listing 35 NEMT providers who met Navajo Department of Health's Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program requirements and who are authorized to provide services within the Navajo Nation, pursuant to the Navajo Nation's regulations, enacted in June 2018 by the Navajo Nation Council. Each of the 35 Non-Emergency Medical Transportation providers submitted an application to the Department of Health within the application deadline and received a permit to operate on the Nation.

The regulations are implemented to protect Navajo people who utilize Non-Emergency Medical Transportation services for medical appointments on and off the Navajo Nation. The regulations require companies to have insurance, vehicle registration, vehicle safety inspections, Navajo business certificates, safe driving records, vehicle maintenance programs, first aid and CPR certification, and comply with HIPAA to protect Navajo client confidentiality, and among other requirements.

We heard the concerns of the small Navajo-owned non-emergency medical transportation providers who did not make the listing. The providers expressed the fear of closing their small businesses and the loss of long patient-client relationships. Most importantly, the Nez-Lizer Administration supports all small Navajo-owned businesses and we cannot create unreasonable barriers for them to lose their businesses, therefore, we have ensured an open enrollment period to give the small Navajo-owned businesses another opportunity to comply with the NEMT regulations.

We want to ensure that these businesses are certified and have met the NDOH program requirement to provide safe and insured NEMT services. The safety of our Navajo people who use this service is critical. The winners in all of this are the clients who use these services. They will have more options to select from when it comes to non-emergency medical transportation services.

## Road Improvements

In every community that we visit and throughout our campaign, the improvement and construction of roads is a high priority for our Navajo people and chapters. High-quality durable roads are the foundation of economic and community building. Our administration continues to work with the resources on hand, which we know is not nearly enough, to improve and construct roads that make transportation easier for our elderly, school buses, public transit, and many others.

Within the last few months, under the leadership of Navajo Nation Division of Transportation Executive Director Garret Silversmith and his dedicated staff, we have made the following progress in regards to roads on the Navajo Nation.

### **Navajo Route 12 – Tsaille/Wheatfields, Arizona**

On August 11th, we finalized a contract to allow the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority in coordination with the Navajo Division of Transportation, to begin construction for the expansion of Navajo Route 12 in the community of Tsaille/Wheatfields. The \$31 million project will expand the current narrow roadway to create shoulder lanes and graveling on both sides of a 10-mile stretch of N12 beginning north of Wheatfields Lake to the Tsaille intersection. This will allow commuters more room to maneuver in case of emergencies or to avoid collisions with livestock and other wildlife that are common on N12. The scope of work will also include the clearing of trees to be used as firewood for local resident in the upcoming winter season, replacement of two bridges, subgrade preparation, installation of drainage culverts, new asphalt





pavement, striping, traffic signage and new right-of-way fencing. According to Navajo Nation Division of Transportation Executive Director Garret Silversmith, construction will take approximately one year – the official start date for construction is November 18, 2019. The division will provide all construction management and monitoring activities. We thank the Honorable Nelson S. BeGaye, former Council member, for his leadership in moving this project forward for his community.

### **Navajo Route 151 – Ganado, Arizona**

On July 12th, the Navajo Division of Transportation reached substantial completion on a soil stabilization project for Navajo Route 151, south of Ganado, Arizona. The project improved 1.5 miles of an existing earth road with drainage improvements, subgrade preparation, four inches of gravel lay down and RoadLoc soil stabilizer. The soil stabilizer hardens the surface of the road while improving drivability even during inclement weather. N151 is a bus route that also provides access for numerous residents. NDOT's Road Maintenance Department handled all phases of this project with some assistance from the contractor with the soil stabilization. The project was completed within three weeks and led by NDOT's Road Maintenance Manager Joe Peterman and Road Maintenance Supervisor Roscoe Tsosie.

### **Navajo Route 9056 – Beshbito, Arizona**

On August 8th, the Navajo Division of Transportation, Apache County District 2 Supervisor Alton Joe Shepherd, and the community of Beshbito celebrated the completion of a three-mile road resurfacing project for Navajo Route 9056 in Beshbito, Arizona. The \$650,000 project was a partnership between NDOT and Apache County District 2 that addressed grade, drainage, culvert installation and soil stabilization to improve N9056. The project also addressed earthwork, cutting and filling and placement of material. NDOT was able to eliminate some of the blind spots on the road. After addressing grade,



NDOT put down a base course of limestone. From there Durablend, which is a soil stabilizer, was applied.

The partnership, which included an intergovernmental agreement with Apache County District 2, benefited the project by expanding the length of the improvements. NDOT was able to maximize its resources through the partnership with Apache County, who were able to use their resources, like the limestone base course and manpower, to lengthen the road improvements. Projects like this improve roads which in turn, improve lives. The project improved a school bus route and a road that will further economic development and access to services for the community.

### **LCR Tribal Park Improvement Project – Cameron, Arizona**

On August 19th, the Navajo Division of Transportation, Navajo Parks and Recreation, Cameron Chapter, and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) celebrated a ribbon-cutting ceremony for safety improvements made to the Little Colorado River Tribal Park. NDOT partnered with Navajo Parks and Recreation to improve the safety of the Little Colorado River Tribal Park for community members and tourists. The project consisted of adding a turning lane into the park, widening the roadway, concrete box culvert extensions, and repaving the access road and parking lot. Funding for the \$2.4 million-dollar project was provided through Navajo Nation general funds, Navajo Fuel Excise Tax funds and Navajo Hotel Occupancy Tax funds.

By addressing grade and widening the lanes leading into the intersection, NDOT improved visibility and safety to the park's entrance. These improvements are critical to the park, which welcomes hundreds of tourists on a daily basis. The project is a great example of departments working together to improve the livelihood of the community by improving infrastructure and in turn, improving economic development and prioritizing safety.

### **Navajo Route 109 – Red Lake, New Mexico**

The Navajo Division of Transportation partnered with Red Lake Chapter and the McKinley County roads department to double chip seal approximately one mile of Navajo Route 109 in Navajo, New Mexico. The two sections of N109 that were improved are known as Cedar Avenue and Shepard Springs Road. Both roads provide access to local housing subdivisions, businesses and an elementary school. NDOT'S road crew performed all the subgrade work and also milled the existing asphalt with an IronWolf crusher. McKinley County Roads was contracted through the chapter to double chip seal and fog seal the road's surface. The potholes on these roads have been a community concern. NDOT and the Chapter prioritized this project due to the benefits for education and access to housing. On August 6th, the double chip seal project reached substantial completion, improving two roads that access Navajo Elementary school.

### **Navajo Route 251 – Cottonwood-Tselani, Arizona**

Navajo Division of Transportation road crews are currently conducting earthwork and addressing grade and drain on Navajo Route 251 in Cottonwood-Tselani Chapter. NDOT Road crews are currently attending to 200,000 cubic meters of earthwork to prepare the road's profile grade for soil stabilization. There are 130 culvert locations that needed to be addressed. Of that, 100 have been put in and there are approximately 30 left on the east end of the road. Additionally, crews are widening the roadway from 20 feet to 24 feet wide. To do this, crews are cutting and filling soil by creating 10-foot flat bottom ditches alongside certain sections of the road. Currently, the project is about 36 percent complete.

NDOT is looking at June 2020 for substantial completion of the project. Improvements made to N251 are being funded by the Federal Highway Administration, who have allocated \$450,000 dollars to the project. The project hasn't been without delay. NDOT road crews have stopped doing pipework, installing culverts, because of an expired 401 permit, which is a Clean Water Act requirement issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Navajo EPA. NDOT and the BIA are currently renewing the permit.



# Navajo Veterans Issues

The Office of the President and Vice President and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration has worked diligently to fulfill our commitment to having a new Veterans Financial Assistance policy in place by October 1st. In many ways, the new policy that we developed addressed the issue of the check processing procedures. It opened the door for us to remove Accounts Payable from the equation to expedite the process. The intent here was to process your checks the same day as your meeting, the next day, or within the same week.

On September 24th, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee ("HEHSC") scheduled a report from the Veterans Administration. However, the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council requested HEHSC to table the policy to provide for further discussion from the grass roots level. At the HEHSC meeting on September 24th, the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council presented HEHSC with a copy of their resolution. HEHSC then accepted the resolution and agreed to address the issue in no later than 60 days.

As stated previously, we fulfilled our commitment to put forth a new policy by October 1, but as a result of the tabling action of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee at the request of the Veterans Advisory Council, the Financial Assistance Policy will not be considered until late November.

The Veterans Advisory Council would like every Navajo Veteran, surviving spouse and Gold Star Mother to have a say in the process. The following is what is now recommended:

- Within the next 60 days, each chapter should hold a meeting. This policy must be listed on the agenda, and every veteran registered with that chapter must be at the meeting as documented by the sign in sheet. This is to document that every veteran has been made aware of the opportunity to present recommendations for changes and to make sure their voice is heard.





- The meeting minutes will reflect the veterans' recommendations and a resolution will be drafted with all the recommendations contained on it, even if they are conflicting recommendations. Those resolutions will then be forwarded to the agency commander for inclusion in the next agency meeting, which must also be within the next 60 days.
- The Agency will consolidate all the resolutions into one single resolution, and their Veterans Advisory Council members will present it to the Director at our November meeting.
- That meeting will need to be before the HEHSC meeting to allow changes to be made to the policy that include all opinions.

We look forward to moving this matter forward by working together with the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee in order to provide improved services to our Navajo Veterans.

In regards to securing an Executive Director for the Navajo Veterans Administration, we committed the position by the end of August 2019. Three candidates responded, however, two did not submit sufficient materials. At the request of the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council, the application deadline was then extended and no other candidates submitted complete packets to be considered. Again, we met our commitment to do everything we could to expedite this process. We are now in the process of finalizing a contract with James D. Zwierlein who was selected in consultation with the Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council.

## Support for Navajo Uranium Workers/Victims

We take this opportunity to thank our Congressional delegation for their support in holding meetings and most recently an open forum in Window Rock, Arizona, on October 2nd to hear directly from former Navajo uranium workers on the detrimental impacts of uranium mining on the Navajo Nation. We extend our gratitude to Congressman Raúl Grijalva, Chairman of the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee, for hearing our concerns and holding this important forum – it meant a lot to the people of the Navajo Nation.

The forum provided an opportunity for former uranium mine workers, health and environmental professionals, and family members of those impacted by uranium mining to provide testimonial stories of health problems, losing loved ones, birth defects caused by uranium, and the lack of resources available from the federal government to help with healthcare costs and treatment.

The Navajo Nation has 524 known open uranium mine sites, with only 219 sites having funds available for clean-up and remediation efforts. A total of 305 sites needs to be addressed, and that poses a continued threat to our environment and the health of our Navajo people.

We won't know the actual amount of uranium mine waste left behind until remedial site evaluations are completed for all 524 abandoned uranium mine sites on the Navajo Nation. We have personally heard countless stories from angry and heartbroken Navajo people about how cancer has decimated Navajo families, killing fathers, mothers, sons, daughters,



brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins – they have every right to be angry and every right to demand justice.

On October 7th, we provided testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs during an official oversight field hearing entitled “America’s Nuclear Past: Examining the Effects of Radiation on Indian Country” held at the Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, N.M.

U.S. Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) of New Mexico chaired the field hearing, which was held to examine the unique history and legacy of the atomic age in Indian Country and discuss efforts to ensure that the federal government lives up to its obligations to compensate Native communities hurt by America’s Cold War activities, as well as clean up and properly maintain abandoned uranium mines and sites. U.S. Reps. Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) and Deb Haaland (D-N.M.) were also part of the field hearing.

Over the past several years, we along with members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council including Honorable Amber Kanazbah Crotty have advocated for the former uranium workers, down winders, and post-1971 mine workers to be included in the reauthorization of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (S. 947/H.R. 3783) by Congress. We will continue to support this position and to advocate at the Congressional level for the passage of these bills.





# Navajo Thaw Implementation Plan

On October 14th, the Nez-Lizer Administration and Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office Executive Director Robert Black Jr., announced the launch of the Navajo Nation's partnership with Native Builders LLC and Building Communities to address infrastructure, community, and economic development of nine Navajo chapter areas including Bodaway-Gap, Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Coppermine, Kaibeto, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tonalea, and Tuba City located in the area commonly known as the Former Bennett Freeze Area.

As we move the Nation forward, we no longer refer to the nine communities as the 'Former Bennett Freeze Area' due to the negative connotation associated with former Indian Affairs Commissioner Robert Bennett. We should not continue to use his name to represent our communities, but we should refer to these communities as an area of empowerment and recognize its great potential. This area has been over-studied so we all know what the problems are. Now is the time to create solutions and work together to improve our communities.

This partnership allows the nine chapters to identify their strategies, initiatives, projects, and priorities to address in a detailed plan, known as the "Navajo Thaw Implementation Plan." The investment plan will leverage the collective power and energy of the chapters to secure funding and development within the area.

In January, we met the area residents during an open meeting near the Black Falls community and many shared concerns over homesite leases, housing, water and power lines, uranium contamination, emergency assistance for veterans, land boundaries, economic opportunities, and others.

The "Navajo Thaw Implementation Plan" will begin with a two-day intensive planning session with each chapter and produce a chapter-specific implementation plan. A regional implementation plan is expected to be completed by March 2020.

As detailed in the Navajo Thaw Implementation Plan, the Navajo Thaw promises to bring the people of the region together at the Chapter level to identify their strategies, initiatives, projects, and priorities that will lead to better economic conditions and higher quality of life.







## Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act (S. 1207/H.R. 644)

We are making significant progress with the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act (S. 1207/H.R. 644), which recognizes the Nation's right to the annual consumptive use of 81,500 acre-feet of water from the Upper Basin of the Colorado River in Utah. The Act also authorizes over \$200 million in federal funding for desperately needed drinking water infrastructure on the Navajo Reservation in Utah in consideration for Navajo waiving claims for additional water, beyond 81,500 acre-feet per year, against the U.S. and the State.

Senator Mitt Romney (R-FL) is the sponsor of S. 1207 and Senators Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Martha McSally (R-AZ), and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) are co-sponsors. Rep. Rob Bishop is the sponsor of the House companion bill, H.R. 644, and all other members of the Utah delegation are co-sponsors. As noted, we have made significant progress in Congress. Indeed, in May 2019, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs voted to approve S. 1207. In June 2019, the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the House companion bill, H.R. 644. The Navajo Nation has also received formal Administration support for the settlement, and both Senator Romney and Representative Bishop are working to move the legislation through Congress as expeditiously as possible.





## Navajo Police Academy Graduates

On November 1st, under the leadership of Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety Executive Director Jesse Delmar and Navajo Police Chief Phillip Francisco, the Navajo Nation will graduate 19 new recruits from the Navajo Police Academy. Since reopening the Navajo Police Academy in Chinle, Arizona, the Division of Public Safety has already graduated two classes – Class 52 and Class 53 – of police officers that are now serving and protecting our communities.

With the addition of the 19 new police officers in November, our Nation will have added a total of 47 new police officers since June 2018. This is a remarkable achievement for any police force. We commend Director Delmar and Police Chief Francisco for their dedication and hard work to increase the public safety presence in our communities.

Recently, the Navajo Nation received a grant that includes funding for a highway safety unit to help prevent speeding on our roadways and to make our roads safer for our Navajo people.

We also continue to work on plans to replace the aging and dilapidated public safety facilities in the communities of Shiprock, New Mexico and Window Rock, Arizona. These projects are a top priority for each branch of Navajo government. We look forward to continuing to work with the 24th Navajo Nation Council and the Judicial Branch to identify and secure funds to construct these new judicial and public safety facilities.



# Crownpoint community reaches another milestone

We take this opportunity to recognize and commend the Crownpoint Chapter, Crownpoint community members, the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development Executive Director JT Willie, and our Nation's past leaders who worked hard over many years to bring the development of the new Crownpoint Hotel and conference center to fruition. On September 27th, we joined the Crownpoint community in breaking ground on this new economic venture for the Nation.

The new hotel was part of the Permanent Trust Fund interest income five-year plan that was developed in collaboration with the Crownpoint Chapter, Division of Economic Development, Office of the President and Vice President, and the previous 23rd Navajo Nation Council. The former Begaye-Nez Administration worked closely with Speaker Seth Damon, when he was chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, and others to finalize legislation that was then approved by the Council and signed into law.

The Crownpoint Chapter and its Land Use Planning Committee have worked on this project for several years and we commend them for their hard work and determination. Through our Diné teaching and practice of T'áá hwó' ajít'éego, or self-reliance and self-determination, the local officials took it upon themselves to package this proposal and bring it forth to leaders at the central level. Once constructed, it will be a wonderful addition to the community and we are pleased to see this economic opportunity develop to create jobs, and strengthening the foundation for the community of Crownpoint to continue its growth.

In 2013, John Daugomah and Jackie Curley of CSB Enterprises, a majority Navajo-owned business, approached the Navajo Nation Eastern Regional Business Development Office and Crownpoint Chapter to inquire about developing a hotel project within the community. With a supporting resolution from the Crownpoint Chapter, the Division of Economic Development finalized the business site lease in 2016 for CSB Enterprises.

Additional funding sources were identified, through the Native American Bank, Navajo Sales Tax fund, Navajo Community Development Financial Institution, and the Office of the President and Vice President, for the \$12.5 million project. When JT Willie was appointed Executive Director of the Division of Economic Development in January, he allocated additional funds for the project as well.

The community of Crownpoint has a vision for their community members and that encompasses economic opportunities and growth. The new hotel and conference center will open new doors of opportunity, new amenities, jobs, out-of-town visitors, and businesses. Also, the hotel's full service will provide guests with convenient and comfortable stay while on the road, opening another component to the Nation's tourism industry. The Crownpoint Hotel and conference center is expected to be completed in late 2020.







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