

NAVAJO TIMES

DINÉ BI NAALTSOOS

Thursday July 30, 2020



The 24th Navajo Nation Council OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

July 30, 2020
Weekly Update

COUNCIL READIES CARES FUND EXPENDITURES FOR WATER, POWER LINES, BROADBAND, HEALTHCARE, HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE, OTHERS

A special message from Speaker Seth Damon On May 5, President Trump announced during a press event that the Navajo Nation would be receiving more than \$600 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act funding. The next day, May 6, the Navajo Nation Office of the Controller confirmed a series of payments had been received from the federal government totaling \$600,559,530.10. The total amount the Navajo Nation has received, to date, equals \$714,189,631.47.

On May 7, I had the honor of introducing the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act (Resolution No. CMY-44-20) that set in place the framework to get the entire amount of \$600 million spent with the direct involvement of our local leaders, internal programs and non-governmental organizations—such as non-profits. After a mandatory 5-day public comment period, the legislation was approved by the Law and Order Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee and the Naabik'iyáti Committee by May 15. At a special session, the 24th Navajo Nation Council approved the Navajo Nation CARES Fund Act on May 19.

These have been only a few of the actions taken by the 24 Council Delegates that represent the 110 Navajo Nation Chapters in response to COVID-19. On an individual basis, every delegate has prepared care packages, conducted no-contact deliveries, arranged for propane, coal, food, water, hay, feminine hygiene products, sewed cloth face masks and acted as leadership on behalf of their community members.

Our work continues as the Dec. 30 deadline to spend CARES Act funds grows nearer and nearer. We invite you to continue submitting your public comments on legislation through the Navajo Nation's only official commenting system, which can be accessed by emailing

comments to: comments@navajo-nsn.gov.

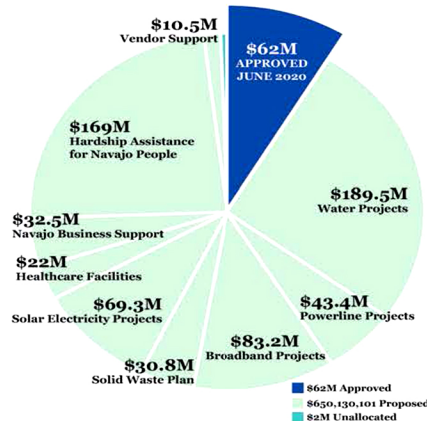
Please stay home, stay safe, wear your face covering in public, practice social distancing and let's beat COVID-19 together.

Navajo Nation Council introduces COVID-19 response proposals for water projects, power lines and broadband Legislation No. 0144-20, "Approving and Adopting the Navajo Nation Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Fund Expenditure Plans for Water Projects, Power line Projects and Broadband-Telecommunications Projects" began consideration by the 24th Navajo Nation Council's HEHSC on Jul. 6.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) Sponsor Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty presented the proposed legislation, which included an initial allocation of \$594,449,922 from the CARES Act for water, power line and broadband projects.

Initially, \$64,226,317 was designated for first-year water projects. An additional \$291,907,869 would be prioritized for future water projects if the CARES Act deadline was extended. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) would be responsible for implementing the expenditure plan, including any grants or contracts necessary for projects. There are additional projects that would be eligible for CARES Act funds, including support for water haulers, the Gallup water project, OMB subsidies, livestock windmills repair and replacements, water well infrastructure

NAVAJO NATION CARES FUND PROPOSED EXPENDITURES IN LEGISLATION NO. 0144-20



Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act Coronavirus Relief Funding A total of \$714,189,631.47 in federal funding was received by the Navajo Nation to respond to the coronavirus. The 24th Navajo Nation Council created the Navajo Nation CARES Fund on May 15 through Resolution No. CMY-44-20, with the goal of spending funds quickly. The Council approved more than \$62 million for hazard pay for front-line responders, personal protective equipment, facility safety insurance, care packages of food, water and basic necessities, bathroom additions and upgrades, assistance for healthcare facilities and other immediate COVID-19 response expenditures.

and repair, long range water planning, and assistance to the DWR buildings and supplies.

\$36,456,395 would be allotted for first-year projects for power line projects. An additional \$158,325,161 would be prioritized with an extension. Power line projects include, service line extensions/agreements, rights-of-way, service drop lines, house wiring, meter looping, trunk lines, transmission upgrades and more. The Division of Community Development (DCD) would administer the funds.

\$30,920,636 would be immediately allocated for building out broadband access and telecommunication capacity. Broadband internet access has also been a major concern for the 24th Navajo Nation Council. Proper access will enable more remote options for education, telehealth, public safety and more.

The goal of these proposed projects is to address current infrastructure issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The projects would also help ensure that Navajo people are protected from future outbreaks. HEHSC approved

over a 4-day series of meetings that began on Jul. 16.

"[M]y colleagues and I have worked diligently around the clock to strengthen the language and have made additions that are critical to addressing the immediate public health needs of our Nation. As we prepare this legislation for Council consideration, I urge my colleagues and President Nez to push this through with the utmost urgency so we can finally get relief aid to our Navajo communities. They have waited too long," said Delegate Crotty. Council Delegate Carl Roessel Slater proposed a further amendment for over \$69 million for

the development and installation of solar projects to provide electricity to underserved communities. The goal is to provide power for over 1,500 homes.

"[O]btaining rights-of-ways for even simple projects in areas where power lines may be nearby can still be cumbersome due to existing regulations posed by the federal government. This is a way around it," said Delegate Slater.

The projects will enable Navajo families to better store and preserve food, heating of water and use basic home appliances. This will further help families make fewer long-distance supply trips into bordertowns and will help lower the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

During the course of the four-day discussion, additional amendments included separate proposals for solid waste projects, solar projects, parks and recreation economic assistance, health care facilities projects and Dineh Chamber of Commerce economic projects.

The Naabik'iyáti

Committee continued to refine Legislation No. 0144-20 on Jul. 28 and approved it with a vote of 22 in favor and 0 opposed.

Navajo Nation Council The 24th Navajo Nation Council received Legislation No. 0144-20 at its special session on Jul. 28. With amendments, the proposed legislation included the following updated proposed expenditure plans:

- 1. Water Projects Expenditure Plan** \$189,505,095
- 2. Power line Projects Expenditure Plan** \$43,370,832
- 3. Broadband-Telecommunication Projects Expenditure Plan** \$83,224,989
- 4. Solid Waste Expenditure Plan** \$30,773,000
- 5. Solar Projects Expenditure Plan** \$69,295,910
- 6. Health Care Facilities Expenditure Plan** \$22,036,016
- 7. Dineh Chamber of Commerce** \$32,500,000
- 8. Hardship Assistance Expenditure Plan** \$168,961,759
- 9. Parks and Recreation Expenditure Plan** \$10,462,500

The 24th Navajo Nation Council must still consider Legislation No. 0144-20 and have extended an invitation to both President Jonathan Nez and Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne to present proposals to the Council as it moves to approve the funding package.

All CARES Fund-related meeting of the 24th Navajo Nation Council and the standing committees is broadcast online and is available to view on the Navajo Nation Council's social media websites on Vimeo, Youtube and Facebook.

Legislation of the Navajo Nation Council can also be accessed online through the Diné Bibehehaz'áanii Binaaltsoos (DiBB) legislative tracking system: dibb.nnols.org.

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