



State of the Navajo Nation Address

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer
Presented to the 24th Navajo Nation Council
Fall Council Session – October 17, 2022

Yá’at’ée’h 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 the State of the Navajo Nation Address for the 2022 Fall Council Session.

For our Diné people, the start of October is known as Gháájí’, the transition of the seasons. The new moon signifies the beginning of a new year for our people. Nihimá Nahasdzáán, our Mother Earth, is letting us know that it is time to prepare for the changing of the weather and seasons – this is also an opportunity for all of us to reflect on our lives and renew our hope and planning for ourselves, our family, and our communities.

Now is the time to prepare our homes for the upcoming winter season by gathering firewood, food and water, blankets, livestock supplies, and other essential items. We have to remain mindful and remember our precious elders as well. We encourage children and grandchildren to help their elders within the community so they are safe and healthy throughout the winter season.

During the month of October, the Navajo Nation also recognizes Breast Cancer Awareness Month and Domestic Violence Prevention Month. For many of our Diné families, these modern-day monsters are a part of their daily lives. Together, we continue to provide support to help our people and those who work directly with them.

The teachings of our elders are also crucial to overcoming adversities and maintaining hope and faith. Through the practice of T'áá hwó' ajít'éego, self-reliance and self-determination, we are more capable of persevering and prospering. We are stronger together by embracing our shared goals and vision.

Today, we began the week with a prayer service to ask for strength and blessings for our Diné people. We come together every Monday morning to pray for the Navajo Nation and to help get us through the challenges that we face, including COVID-19. Since the onset of the pandemic over two and a half years ago, the top priority for our Administration has been to save lives and protect the health of our people. We continue to work closely with our public health experts to mitigate the pandemic.

In August, all businesses on the Navajo Nation were allowed to operate at 100-percent capacity and gathering limits were also increased for school and other public places. We have directed all Executive Branch offices that provide direct services to fully reopen with precautions in place.

On August 24th, the Navajo Nation also announced its first confirmed case of Monkeypox in the state of New Mexico. Prior to the first confirmed case, our Administration established a Monkeypox Preparedness Team tasked with monitoring, planning, and coordinating precautionary efforts to address Monkeypox, which was spreading across the country at the time.

On August 10th, we issued a letter through the Navajo Nation Washington Office to U.S. President Joe Biden and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, requesting that Monkeypox vaccines be prioritized for tribal communities. Health care facilities now have a limited number of vaccines available for patients who are considered high-risk. On September 19th, three additional cases of Monkeypox were announced, bringing the overall number of cases to four where it currently remains. We will continue to work together to mitigate this public health concern as well.

On September 27th, we had the honor of joining Roselyn Tso as she took the oath of office to become the first Navajo person to serve as the Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS). Director Tso was also joined by her family as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services

Xavier Becerra administered the oath during the ceremony held in Washington, D.C. As the new head of IHS, Director Tso now oversees the delivery of health care services to 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives, the management of \$7.4 billion in federal health care funds, and 15,000 IHS employees across the country.

As many of you know, Director Tso played a vital role in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic on the Navajo Nation, in coordination with the Navajo Department of Health. This monumental achievement will serve all tribal nations across the country as we strive to improve the health care system within the Navajo Nation. We congratulate Director Tso and we thank our Congressional delegation, President Biden, the Navajo Nation Washington Office, and many others who advocated for her confirmation.

Once again, we thank the 24th Navajo Nation Council for approving over \$1 billion in funding through the American Rescue Plan Act to deliver water, electricity, broadband, housing for families and veterans, COVID-19 mitigation, bathroom additions, E-911/public safety, local chapter priorities, and to ensure that every enrolled member of the Navajo Nation can receive hardship assistance.

\$1 billion is the largest amount of funding approved by the Nation at any one time, but based on past assessments we know that the needs of the Navajo Nation exceed \$20 billion and likely more, now, due to the rise in the costs of construction materials. The \$1 billion includes the following:

- \$215 million for water/wastewater
- \$96.4 million for home electricity connections
- \$120 million for broadband
- \$80 million for housing
- \$50 million for housing for Navajo veterans
- \$120 million for new hardship assistance applicants
- \$150 million for bathroom additions and necessary utilities
- \$210 million for local chapter priorities
- \$35 for E911 and public safety
- \$19.2 million for detox/treatment centers and transitional housing

- \$5 million for cyber security
- \$15.5 million for former Bennett Freeze area housing

Within the ARPA resolution, \$210 million was allocated and divided among each of the 24 Council Delegate regions for local priorities. Early on, we encouraged our lawmakers to allocate funding for senior centers in their districts. As you may recall, when the legislation was being debated there was an amendment passed that reallocated funding for senior centers for the \$210 million allocation for local projects.

The Division of Community Development, Fiscal Recovery Fund Office, and other Executive programs have met with the majority of Council Delegates to provide technical support in the development of expenditure plans for each region. As we move forward in this process, we have to remain mindful of the provisions within the resolution and the federal guidelines as we work together to expedite these priorities.

On August 30th, we joined U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, as she announced that the Biden-Harris Administration had awarded the Navajo Nation over \$50 million through the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), to fund high-speed internet infrastructure deployment projects on the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office worked with Navajo Tribal Utility Authority and technical experts to compile broadband infrastructure projects that were submitted to NTIA for consideration. In January, we also advocated for the funding during a consultation session with NTIA and in virtual meetings with Secretary Ramondo. Each of the 63 projects that were submitted by the Navajo Nation were fully funded.

In September, we along with Council Delegate Charlaine Tso, joined Diné families who reside in the Westwater Subdivision in Utah as they received electricity in their homes for the very first time. This is life-changing for these families who have lived without electricity in their homes for so many years. Electricity not only provides lighting, heating, and other basic amenities, but it also opens doors to more opportunities. A couple of years ago, we

welcomed Utah Lt. Gov. Henderson to Westwater to visit with the families and to see their homes and the challenges they face. We are very grateful and appreciative to everyone who helped to finally deliver electricity to these homes, including Council Delegate Charlene Tso, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, Lt. Governor Henderson, NTUA, and many others. The work doesn't end here — the next step is to deliver running water to these homes and that process has begun.

In early September, we also joined Council Delegate Paul Begay to mark the successful completion of powerline extensions to 18 homes for families that reside in the region known as Preston Mesa, near Tonalea, Arizona. In September 2021, our Administration finalized a sub-grant agreement between the Navajo Nation and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority to begin the powerline extensions, which were funded through the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) program, Tonalea Chapter, and the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority. This would not have been possible without the continued advocacy of Council Delegate Paul Begay and the Tonalea Chapter officials.

Since 2020, the Navajo Nation has connected electricity to over 1,100 homes for Diné families and that number continues to grow each month. We look forward to seeing thousands more of our Navajo people being connected to the electric grid with the \$96.4 million that was approved through the American Rescue Plan Act funds.

We thank the 24th Navajo Nation Council for supporting several appropriations within the past few months for many priorities within our communities. These accomplishments would not be possible without the hard work of local chapter officials, community members, Navajo Nation employees, and many others who worked to develop each project funding request. We acknowledge your hard work and commitment to your community. All of the recent appropriations were signed into law by the Office of the President and Vice President including the following:

- \$25 million for an assisted living center for elderly and disabled and to expand the current cancer treatment center at the Tuba City Regional Health Care Center
- \$13.2 million for the Kayenta Judicial Complex
- \$7.6 million for the Chilchinbeto Multipurpose building

- \$4.1 million for an apartment and multipurpose complex in Navajo, New Mexico
- \$13.3 million for renovations within Navajo Nation government facilities to improve access to persons with disabilities
- \$11.4 million for the Shiprock hotel and restaurant
- \$1.6 million for the Ganado Chapter senior and veterans center project
- \$1.2 million for the Tuba City senior center project
- \$2.2 million for the Tselani/Cottonwood Chapter senior center project
- \$2.1 million for the Becenti Chapter veterans center project
- \$7.2 million for the Gadiiahi/To'koi Chapter community building project
- \$2 million for the Nazlini Chapter senior center project
- \$2.5 million for the Westwater community for infrastructure development
- \$1.6 million for the 2022 Navajo Nation elections
- \$203,000 for the Tsaile/Wheatfields cemetery project

Homes for our Navajo veterans are being built. On September 6th, we had the honor of handing the key to a new home to 89-year-old U.S. Army veteran Kee C. Nez in Teecnopec, Arizona. Mr. Nez lost his previous home in a fire and he and his wife had been living with his daughter since. It took a lot of work to reach this point. The Navajo Veterans Administration, with the support of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, fixed the veterans housing policy and moved this program forward. With the ARPA funds, there is now \$50 million obligated to build many more homes for our Navajo veterans and that process has started.

In May, the Navajo Veterans Administration received recognition and became the first federally recognized tribe with a veteran service organization to be accredited by the federal VA. This means that for the very first time, the Navajo Nation now have access to the federal VA systems to prepare, present, and process veterans benefits claims for Diné veterans. The Navajo Veterans Administration now has staff members who are processing federal claims at the local level in each of the five Navajo agencies on the Navajo Nation. This is helping to deliver federal benefits to Diné veterans much

more efficiently without having our warriors travel to cities off of the Navajo Nation.

This week, the community of Chinle will also break ground for the construction of the 60-bed “Navajo Warriors Home” nursing home facility dedicated to serving our Navajo veterans. Lastly, we thank the 24th Navajo Nation Council for supporting and approving full funding for veterans’ services in the FY2023 Comprehensive Budget, which avoided a funding shortfall. We stayed true to our commitment to our veterans to ensure that there would not be a funding shortfall in the new fiscal year.

We thank the members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Division Directors, program managers, OMB, OOC, and all of the hard-working employees who committed themselves to developing and finalizing the Fiscal Year 2023 Comprehensive Budget. This was a collaborative and well thought budget that prioritizes several critical needs and services including the following:

- \$500,000 in additional funding for the Proactive Criminal Enforcement Program to deter drug/bootlegging activities and violent crimes in our communities
- \$500,000 in additional funding for the Missing Persons Unit
- 5% general wage increase for all regular Navajo Nation employees
- \$500,000 in additional funding for animal control
- \$500,000 in additional funding for earthen dams and windmills repairs
- \$1,000,000 in additional funding for housing renovations
- \$250,000 for an energy office
- \$750,000 for a “one stop shop” to expedite infrastructure projects
- \$200,000 for non-emergency medical transport
- \$1,063,399 in additional funding for senior centers

To highlight some of the work being completed by the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation, in partnership with the BIA, counties, and others, we have provided an overview of road projects in the five Navajo agencies that have made progress since our last State of the Navajo Nation Address in July of this year:

Northern Agency:

- Rock Point – N8009: Excavation/embankment and gravel completed
- Aneth – N5099: Chip seal repair completed
- San Juan – N361/N566: Grade/drain and double chip seal completed
- Ojo Amarillo – N101: Pavement in progress
- Sanostee – N5012: Pavement and bridge in progress
- Toadlena/Two Grey Hills – N192: Grade/drain and culvert installation in progress
- Toadlena – N19: Fencing and cattleguard installation in progress
- Shiprock – N546: millings/gravel, safety/bus turn-around in progress

Western Agency:

- Black Mesa region (10 chapters) – various routes: Red Dog graveling completed
- Kayenta – N106: Pavement and markings completed
- Shonto – N128: Single chip seal and fog seal completed
- Birdsprings – N71: Pavement in progress
- Kaibeto – N21: Excavation/embankment and gravel in progress
- Inscription House – N16: Chip seal repair and double chip seal in progress

Chinle Agency:

- Tselani/Cottonwood – N251: Grade/drain and gravel in progress
- Tsaile/Wheatfields – N8077: Double chip seal in preparation stage
- Pinon – N8030: Culvert installation and erosion control in preparation stage
- Blue Gap/Tachee – N29: Gravel/stabilization and drainage repair in preparation stage
- Black Mesa – N8065: Low water crossing in preparation stage
- Round Rock – C492: Grading and drainage repair in preparation stage
- Lukachukai – N136: Grade/drain and gravel in preparation stage
- Round Rock – C590: Grading and drainage repair in preparation stage

Fort Defiance Agency:

- Nahata Dzil – N2007: Pavement and Bridge completed by BIA/NECA
- Whitecone – N9062: Gravel and stabilization completed

- Teesto – N9069: Gravel and stabilization completed
- Jeddito – N9101: Gravel and stabilization completed
- Jeddito – N9101 (1A): Gravel and stabilization completed
- Jeddito – N9102 (1B): Gravel and stabilization completed
- Red Lake – N112: Double chip seal completed
- Sawmill – N9702: Stabilization and double chip seal completed
- Window Rock – Kaibeto Dr.: Asphalt milling/gravel/stabilization and drainage in progress
- Window Rock – Jeddito Dr.: Asphalt milling/gravel/stabilization and drainage in progress
- Fort Defiance – N112: Grade and Drain in progress
- Jeddito – N9102: re-gravel and stabilization in progress
- Ganado – N151: re-gravel and stabilization in progress
- Fort Defiance – N9073: re-gravel and stabilization in progress
- Sawmill – N9072: re-gravel and stabilization in progress
- Fort Defiance – N112: Grade/drain and gravel in progress

Eastern Agency:

- Casamero Lake – C19: Double chip seal completed by McKinley County
- Mariano Lake – N11: Pavement, bridge, fencing, cattleguards, signage in progress
- Tohajilee – N57: Pavement, striping, and signage in progress
- Crownpoint – Solar street light project in progress

The State of the Navajo Nation provides a brief overview of ongoing issues and recent accomplishments, but we understand that there are many more issues that our leaders need to address together. As we move forward, we as leaders elected by our people, must look many years ahead and think of our generations to come.

COVID-19 remains a top priority. We remain focused on addressing and mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to urge our Diné people to get fully vaccinated, which includes getting the booster shots. We also take this opportunity to once again thank all of the frontline warriors and all of our Navajo Nation employees, and all of our county, state, and

federal partners for your dedication and hard work in the midst of this pandemic.

We join our Diné people in praying for strength, wisdom, protection, and good health. We thank them for supporting all of our Nation's leaders. Together, we face many difficult challenges, but it is incumbent upon us to work together to serve the common good, to put differences aside, and address the issues that create barriers to progress and create real change. The changes that our people want to see in their lifetime.

Our ancestors passed down many good teachings, prayers, and values that have withstood the test of time and many adversities. Teachings such as T'áá hwó'ajít'éego, or self-reliance and self-determination, will help us along the way in everything that we strive to accomplish for our people. We thank you for the opportunity to present the State of the Navajo Nation Address and we wish you a productive Fall Council Session. May God bless each of you and may God bless the Great Navajo Nation.