The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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# Navajo Nation Council Resolution CJY-67-20 power line expenditures signed into law for $44,220,832

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** August 17, 2020

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. —** The power line expenditure plan approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council through Resolution No. CJY-67-20 was signed into law Sunday through a partial line-item veto action by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez. In total, $44,220,832 in immediate power line project expenditures are authorized from the Navajo Nation CARES Fund to address the electrification needs of Navajo households that have been exacerbated by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"The power line projects approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council in response to the coronavirus pandemic reflect the most immediate opportunities for the Navajo people to have access to the electrical grid for the first time ever," said Speaker Seth Damon. "Throughout this process of responding to the pandemic, Council has reaffirmed that gaining access to the electrical grid opens up so many opportunities to better the health and well-being of entire households."

The Navajo Nation Council began consideration of potential power line projects in May during a series of Naabik'íyáti' Committee work sessions. Utility companies, technical experts and project managers took part in extensive discussions about the impacts the pandemic has caused to the Navajo Nation's power line infrastructure.

"What was once a challenge of vetting and appropriating funding for these coronavirus response projects, has now become a challenge in expending and managing these projects so that they are completed quickly and properly," said Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Houck, Lupton, Nahata Dziil). "These power line projects could not come any quicker because, in the larger picture, not having access to electricity in the middle of the pandemic is sometimes the difference between life and death, unfortunately."

The approved expenditures for power line projects total $44,220,832. These include:

- $13,897,562 for NTUA power line projects, including material, labor and equipment funding for 498 customers;
- $24,747,269 for NTUA electrical grid capacity development projects, including pole replacements, substation improvements, switch installations, and more;
- $163,723 for Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative construction and ROW costs for 166 families and system improvements;
- $1,062,278 for Continental Divide Electric Cooperative service line extensions, drop lines, looping, ROWs and more;
- $3.5 million for Ramah-Pine Hill campus electrical capacity upgrades;
- $850,000 for the Klagetoh Chapter Salt Springs South Electric Project which includes an NTUA main trunk line and customer extensions.

The Council, through the approved expenditure plan, stated the power line projects are necessary to ensure that Navajo communities receive basic utilities for water heating, and for medical and refrigeration purposes so that the Navajo People are adequately protected from COVID-19.

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The projects include service line extensions/agreements, right-of-way, service drop lines, house wiring, meter looping, trunk lines, transmission upgrades and more. The project funds, including those authorized for non-governmental entities, will be administered through the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development and in accordance with the federal CARES Act and Treasury guidelines.

On May 22, the Navajo Nation Council began discussing power line projects in tandem with discussions on water projects. Both medical and technical personnel testified that access to the electrical grid posed another challenge, in addition to access to clean water, that Navajo households face in trying to keep their homes in clean order.

During the Council's discussion on the legislation, the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) stated that more than 15,000 homes on the Navajo Nation lack access to electricity within its service area.

In mostly eastern regions of the Navajo Nation, other utility companies reported that complicated land statuses, or 'checkerboard area' has impeded many power line projects. The expenditure plan approved by the Navajo Nation Council addresses those issues and provides necessary funding to move power line projects forward in the eastern areas of the Navajo Nation.

Previously, the Navajo Nation Council established the Navajo Nation CARES Fund through Resolution No. CMY-44-20. The fund is comprised of all federal funds received by the Navajo Nation from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Projects to directly address power delivery needs and connections were ultimately approved by the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee, the Resources and Development Committee, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee and finally the Navajo Nation Council before being delivered to Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez for presidential action.

President Nez returned Resolution No. CJY-67-20 with partial line-item vetoes on the tenth day of the 10-day action period following certification by the Speaker of the Navajo Nation. In total $475,666,192 was approved and signed into law through CJY-67-20. The resolution is publicly accessible on the Navajo Nation Council's legislative tracking system, Diné Bibeehaz'áanii Binaaltsoos (DiBB): http://dibb.nnols.org.

"Thank you to the 24th Navajo Nation Council for moving the legislation through the process with all the hard work put in by Delegates and Legislative Staff," said President Nez in a letter to Speaker Damon.

Executive Branch programs will now be responsible for administering Navajo Nation CARES Funded projects for both Navajo Nation departments and for projects involving non-governmental organizations.

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**MEDIA CONTACTS:** communications@navajo-nsn.gov, (928) 287-2085
Byron C. Shorty, INT Communications Director
Timothy E. Benally, Public Information Officer
Isabella S. Robbins, Staff Writer