



Navajo Nation Council approves coronavirus \$93 million immediate expenditure response package

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Responding to public input, information shared in Naabik'iyáti' Committee work sessions and discussions with programs and local leaders, the 24th Navajo Nation Council approved a \$93 million coronavirus (COVID-19) immediate expenditure response package on Friday.

The COVID-19 response package will utilize a portion of the more than \$600 million received by the Navajo Nation since May 6 from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act relief funding.

The immediate expenditures from the Navajo Nation CARES Fund, which was established by the Navajo Nation Council's earlier Resolution No. CMY-44-20, totaled \$50,559,530.10 before the Council's amendments to the line-item expenditures.

After the Naabik'iyáti' Committee and Council amendments, the Navajo Nation Health Incident Command Center within the Navajo Department of Health was authorized to expend a total of \$93,059,530.10 from the Fund for the following purposes:

- \$10 million for care packages of food, water and basic necessities;
- \$2 million to enable tele-work capability for government employees;
- \$3.5 million for bathroom additions and upgrades;
- \$7 million for burnout assistance for 156 homes;
- \$3 million in assistance for Public Law 93-638 healthcare facilities on the Navajo Nation;
- \$2,559,530.10 to improve procurement processing of Navajo Nation CARES Fund expenditures;
- \$55 million to be distributed to Local Governance Act (LGA) Certified Chapters and non-LGA Certified Chapters to address COVID-19 relief and mitigation issues at the local level, pursuant to the 50/50 formula set forth at 12 N.N.C. § 820 (O); and,
- \$10 million to the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch to combat COVID-19.

Once the approved legislation is engrossed, or updated to its final legal form, by the Office of Legislative Services and then certified by the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council, it will be delivered to the Navajo Nation President for approval, regular veto or line-item veto.

Budget & Finance Committee

When the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) considered Legislation No. 0116-20 on Jun. 2, the committee amended the legislation to create the three-branch responsibility for developing and preparing expenditure plans. An expenditure plan is a document that establishes legal sufficiency and accountability for the use of Navajo Nation funds.

Together, the President of the Navajo Nation, Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council and Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation will jointly incorporate the needs of the whole Navajo Nation, all three branches and the needs of the Kayenta Township through one or more expenditure plans.

The BFC also added language to include the Speaker and the Chief Justice in the presentation of a final expenditure plan(s) for the remaining balance, including future deposits, of the Navajo Nation CARES Fund. Those plans will require the approval of the BFC, Naabik'iyáti' Committee and the Navajo Nation Council.

Naabik'iyáti' Committee

On Jun. 18, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee approved three amendments before referring Legislation No. 0116-20 to the Navajo Nation Council. Earlier, on Jun. 15, the committee held a work session with all three branch chiefs to work out a merger of the remaining provisions of the line-item vetoed Resolution No. CMY-44-20, formerly known as Legislation No. 0115-20, and Legislation No. 0116-20. Without it, the language of either of the two measures contradicted or conflicted with the other.

The resulting amendments clarified the status of Navajo Nation CARES Funds and bridged the expedited procurement process and expenditure plan framework of CMY-44-20 with the three-branch approach and immediate expenditures of Legislation No. 0116-20. The Naabik'iyáti' Committee also made the significant amendment to add funding of \$55 million through the Health Command Incident Center to distribute to Navajo Nation Chapters for relief and mitigation issues. Support for Navajo contractors and businesses was also established in expending Navajo Nation CARES Funds.

The allocation for hazard pay was also amended by the Naabik'iyáti' Committee, but the item would be more directly addressed by Legislation No. 0132-20, sponsored by Speaker Seth Damon.

Navajo Nation Council

At a special session on Jun. 19, the 24th Navajo Nation Council took up Legislation No. 0116-20 with the prior committees' amendments and discussed, at length, the immediate expenditure line-items. To create more immediate support for justice services and Navajo families experiencing hardships due to faulty or nonexistent bathroom facilities and homes lost to fire, the Council approved \$20.5 million in new expenditures.

The Council also approved an amendment to delete line-items for personal protective equipment (PPE), payroll and hazard pay expenses, and facilities disinfection and reconfiguration allocations because it had already approved \$41 million for those purposes under Legislation No. 0132-20.

In approving Legislation No. 0116-20, the Navajo Nation Council reaffirmed that the President of the Navajo Nation is delegated the authority to negotiate agreements with federal agencies on behalf of the Navajo Nation to expand the use of federal CARES Act funds for needed relief of Navajo families. The Navajo Nation Code requires those agreements to be approved by the Budget and Finance Committee of the Navajo Nation Council before they may be executed by the Navajo Nation President.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council approved a total \$134,059,530.10 in COVID-19 response funding through Legislation Nos. 0132-20 and 0116-20 on Friday, Jun. 19.

All discussion of Navajo Nation CARES Funds, including Legislation No. 0116-20, by the Navajo Nation Council and standing committees can be accessed online at the livestream archive: www.vimeo.com/navajonationcouncil.

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