

THE NAVAJO NATION



JONATHAN NEZ | PRESIDENT MYRON LIZER | VICE PRESIDENT

July 28, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
H-204, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:


We respectfully request that you schedule a vote on final passage of S. 886, the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act (NUWRSA), before the House leaves for the August recess. As discussed and explained in our June 22, 2020 letter to the House, nearly 40 percent of the Navajo Nation lacks running water or adequate sanitation in their homes. To make matters worse, the Navajo Nation's COVID-19 infection rate on a per capita basis is one of the highest in the country and the Navajo Nation has more COVID-19 deaths than many states. The House has an opportunity to take immediate action to mitigate future COVID-19 outbreaks and address the drinking water crisis on the Navajo Reservation by passing S. 886. Although the Senate unanimously passed S. 886, the House of Representatives has so not acted on it, further delaying the relief that it will ultimately bring to the Navajo people.


The Navajo Nation has over 300,000 enrolled members and is the largest Indian reservation spanning portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The conditions on Navajo are dire and the pandemic only compounds our needs. With so few watering points across the Navajo Nation, families must travel hours to reach these points and must ration their water accordingly. Without access to clean drinking water, the Navajo Nation will continue to struggle, and its members will be more susceptible to deadly illnesses such as COVID-19.

S. 886 would provide the means to begin to address these critical needs. Through NUWRSA, the Navajo Nation would receive approximately \$220 million in federal and state funding for desperately needed drinking water infrastructure on the Reservation in exchange for the Nation waiving its water-related claims against the United States and State of Utah. In 2016, Congress first introduced the settlement legislation and on June 4, 2020, the Senate unanimously passed S. 886, demonstrating the broad bi-partisan support for the legislation.

The Navajo Nation recognizes that there is more to be done for Indian Country and we stand ready to assist you on this work, but S. 886 is ready for final passage. The House's inaction on S. 886 or sending it back to the Senate for further consideration will only delay addressing the basic human needs of the Navajo people. Therefore, we respectfully request that you schedule a vote on final passage of S. 886 before the House recesses in August.

Sincerely,


Jonathan Nez, President
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Myron Lizer, Vice President
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CC: The Honorable Steny Hoyer
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The Honorable David Schweikert
The Honorable Ruben Gallego
The Honorable Tom O'Halleran
The Honorable Andy Biggs
The Honorable Debbie Lesko
The Honorable Ann Kirkpatrick

The Honorable Greg Stanton
The Honorable Rob Bishop
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The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan
The Honorable Deb Haaland
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