Written by Staff Reports
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WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer extended their appreciation to the Navajo Nation's congressional delegation in a press release published on Dec. 23 for their successful efforts to earmark funding to construct domestic violence shelters in Tuba City, Ariz. and Shiprock, N.M. The funding was included in the $1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill passed by the U.S. House on Dec. 23, which is expected to be signed into law by President Joe Biden.

The Navajo Nation Division of Social Services, under Executive Director Deannah Neswood Gishey, worked closely with congressional members to put forth the funding proposal. Nez and Lizer also issued letters of support, which resulted in $4.1 million for the Tuba City shelter and $3 million for the Shiprock facility being approved.

"On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we commend Senator [Mark Kelly, D, Ariz.,] and Representatives [Tom O'Halleran, D-Ariz., and Teresa Leger Fernández, D-N.M.,] for supporting Navajo victims and survivors of violence through needed resources and services," Nez said. "We also recognize Director Neswood Gishey and her team for providing the technical support and expertise that was needed throughout this process."

Nez also explained what having more domestic shelters on Navajo Nation will mean to the community.

"In many situations, victims who leave their abusive partners often experience homelessness and isolation," Nez said. "Constructing more shelters on the Navajo Nation will offer victims a housing option and supportive services such as counseling, childcare, transportation, life skills, education, and job training. Shelters also provide victims an opportunity to achieve long-term safety and stability."

The Navajo Department of Family Services, under the Division of Social Services, will operate the emergency shelter utilizing its Navajo Family Harmony Program to provide culturally holistic advocacy, support services, prevention, and education.

"Tribal communities, including the Navajo Nation, experience higher rates of domestic violence

compared to other areas of the country," Lizer said. "Yet, we have limited domestic violence shelters across our large land base."

Lizer also spoke about the effects of domestic violence.

"Domestic violence incidents affect every person within a home and can have long-lasting negative impacts on children's emotional well-being and social and academic functioning," Lizer said. "We need to stand together to stop all abuse and get on the road to recovery, healing, and restoration,"

According to a U.S. Department of Justice report, *Ending Violence So Children Can Thrive*, domestic violence between spouses contributes to most injuries of Navajo women ages 15 to 44. American Indian children and juveniles — including Navajo people — experience post-traumatic stress disorder at the same rate as combat veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, or triple the rate of the general population.

"This is a major victory for Navajo families, advocates, and victims who handle domestic violence situations on a continuous basis," Neswood Gishey said. "I am very proud and thankful of the collaborative work that was completed to move this spending proposal through congress and onto the desk of President Biden. We look forward to seeing the bill signed into law."

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