



The Navajo Nation  
Yideeskáądi Nitsáhákees

DR. BUU NYGREN **PRESIDENT**  
RICHELLE MONTOYA **VICE PRESIDENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept 27, 2024**

**CONTACT: George Hardeen, Public Relations Director**

Email: [george.hardeen@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:george.hardeen@navajo-nsn.gov)

Cell: 928-810-9174

## Navajo President Buu Nygren line-item vetoes continuing resolution, asks Navajo Nation Council for comprehensive budget by November

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren has line-item vetoed \$2.7 million from the Navajo Nation Council’s Sept. 17 continuing resolution and off-Navajo Nation travel while retaining funding for veterans, elders, domestic violence shelters and scholarships.

He said the Council’s unprecedented and muddled continuing resolution, Legislation CS-39-24, provides only 50 percent of Fiscal Year 2024 Comprehensive Budget amounts for some Navajo programs, departments and divisions, while others are funded at 100 percent for a six-month period, rather than approving the Fiscal Year 2025 Comprehensive Budget that complies with an established Three Branch Chiefs agreement approach.

“Though this legislation is being called a ‘Continuing Resolution,’ it is not a true Continuing Resolution,” the President wrote in his nine-page veto message to Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley and the 25<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council. “Rather, it is a confusing combination of both a continuing resolution and a comprehensive budget resolution.”

He said the Council took attributes of a comprehensive budget and tried to apply it to a continuing resolution.

“This is important to note because this legislation may have consequences that no one can predict due to the arbitrary decision by the Council to

***The Council’s continuing resolution “leads to ineffective planning for many of our departments and takes away from government services we provide the Navajo People.”***

– Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren

select departments to be fully funded for the entire fiscal year, while others are funded for only six months,” he said. “We must have one or the other as this is much like the analogy of trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.”

To resolve this and put the government “back on the right course,” President Nygren said the Council’s goal should be to deliver a comprehensive budget to him by the first week of November “so that we lose no more than one quarter of FY2025 with this unprecedented budget approach.”

He said the Council’s CR “leads to ineffective planning for many of our departments and takes away from government services we provide the Navajo People.”

The President said the Council’s CR, which passed unanimously without debate, deliberation or

questioning, includes spending a significant portion of the Personnel Lapse Fund and the Permanent Trust Fund Income allocations.

***“The President’s priority is to ensure our government continues to function, direct services are not interrupted, and that any potential negative impacts are not felt by our people.”***

**– OPVP Legal Counsel Candace Begody-Slim**

“This is necessary in order to prevent layoffs, but also regrettable as there was not a full debate on how to spend these two funds, and we are potentially losing significant opportunities,” he said of Council’s Special Session held Sept. 17. “It is disheartening that the Navajo Nation Council did not address these errors or have meaningful debate before passing the legislation by a vote of 20 to 0. This is not how Navajo Nation legislation should be treated.”

The different approaches will lead to some employees shouldering the difficulty of figuring out which applies to them and navigating what President Nygren called a “confusing resolution.” Implementing this budget now will be left to the Navajo Office of Management and Budget.

“This legislation requires already overworked employees to take time away from serving the Navajo people and moving forward important initiatives as they will spend several days processing paperwork to ensure that there are no layoffs,” he said.

Without a comprehensive budget that follows a Three Branch Chiefs Agreement, “we cannot adjust allocations to meet these increasing demands, resulting in reduced services or program cuts,” he said.

On June 21, the President, Speaker and Navajo Supreme Court Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne signed a Three Branch Chiefs Agreement on the budget as branch chiefs have done since 1990. Using the

Three Branch Chiefs agreement is clear under Navajo law and has been the practice of the government.

Then, on Sept. 12 in an unprecedented action, the Speaker rescinded her signature on the agreement.

President Nygren called upon the Speaker and Chief Justice to continue

the Nation’s long-standing practice of a Three Branch Chiefs Agreement rather than to allow a few delegates on the Budget and Finance Committee to dictate the budget process.

“The approach in the legislation undermines strategic investments in critical areas such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare,” the President added. “This all hinders progress and innovation.”

Candace Begody-Slim, the President’s legal counsel who was part of the budget team that analyzed the continuing resolution and addressed its numerous errors, said President Nygren had hoped the Council would approve the Comprehensive Budget using the Navajo Nation’s longstanding practice of the Three Branch Chiefs agreement.

The Three Branch Chiefs agreement was created in 1989 during government reform to respect the respective powers of the three branches and allow the three branch chiefs to decide the needs of their own branches.

“The President wanted to avoid furloughs, layoffs and a government shutdown,” Begody-Slim said. “As the President stated in his Presidential Budget Message, he wanted to ensure that education was funded, our veterans were taken care of, and that our employees benefited from the general wage adjustment. He expected to do that through the comprehensive budget. But obviously that did not happen.”

Put simply, a true continuing resolution for a six-month period would use the budget figures from the FY2024 comprehensive budget at 50 percent and fund the programs and continue operations, while a comprehensive budget is being worked out.

“That's what a clean, true, simple continuing resolution is,” Begody-Slim said. “It is a short-term fix. But this is the first time the Navajo Nation has seen a CR of this kind. Some are calling it a hybrid. We're calling it a hodgepodge.”

Some have referred to the Council's CR as a “hybrid,” implying that it's a good thing, Begody-Slim said.

“But as our team has said, this budget has been Frankensteined.”

“In navigating the CR, our team had to understand the true impacts and consequences of this budget and its impact once it is implemented,” she said. “The President's priority is to ensure our government continues to function, direct services are not interrupted, and that any potential negative impacts are not felt by our people.”

President Nygren agreed that there are numerous errors in the Council's CR, which he outlined in

three pages of his veto message and were corrected through his line-item vetoes. His vetoes are intended to avoid layoffs and to ensure there is sufficient funding to operate until a comprehensive budget is developed within the next two months.

“The need to adopt a comprehensive budget through an open and transparent process is underscored by the need for me to line-item errors in CS-39-24,” he said.

To ensure the Council stays focused to develop a comprehensive budget that complies with Navajo law by November, the President said he vetoed funding for off-reservation travel which he is happy to reinstate in a FY2025 Comprehensive Budget.

In addition, the President said he asked Navajo Nation Controller Sean McCabe to report all travel, salaries, stipends, expenses and reimbursements for himself as President, the Vice President and council delegates in McCabe's quarterly report to the Council.

“Having heard much criticism regarding my travel, I am happy to make these reports public,” the President said.

###