



THE PEOPLE'S SECOND STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION

The Honorable Dr. Buu Nygren

Yá'át'ééh, and welcome to To'Nanees'Dizi,

I extend my greetings to our Navajo people, Navajo Nation employees, members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council, division directors, local officials, and visiting dignitaries. Thank you for joining us for the 2nd People's State of the Navajo Nation address.

I am Dr. Buu Nygren, President of the Navajo Nation. As a member of the Red Running into the Water Clan, I am proud to represent our community.

I would also like to acknowledge my wife, First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, our current Apache County Attorney. Her experience and dedication have been a significant support throughout my presidency.

Over the past two years, my administration has focused on recovery and rebuilding following the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Over the past two years, we have worked to ensure that our people receive the essential services they need. I hold high expectations for my administration prioritizing accountability, transparency, and efficiency.

I'm happy to say, we've been busy.

We have taken bold steps to revitalize the economy, strengthen our financial foundation, create new jobs, and uplift our entrepreneurs.

This year we relaunched the ARPA Small Business Artisan Relief program, which brought more than \$6.34 million in essential funding to 541 Navajo businesses.

Awards ranged from \$5,000-\$60,000. This helped sustain many of our small businesses and preserved our traditional cultural arts.



We secured \$26 million in NSBCI funding in 2024 from the U.S. Treasury. We're working with Change Labs to disburse the first \$7 million in loans to small businesses and nonprofits next month. This program will deploy nearly \$89 million over the next 10 years.

Our investments have also developed successful hospitality establishments to fuel our economies.

- The Shonto Hotel, opening in February 2025, is projected to generate \$250,000 in annual revenue and create 30 jobs. The Nation invested \$17 million in this project. I am happy to see we are close to completion.
- The Shiprock Pinnacle Hotel will create 40 jobs and bring in \$250,000 in annual tax revenue. Initially launched eight years ago, my administration started construction in October.

This \$22M project is set for completion in Spring 2026.

- The Horseshoe Bend Resort is expected to create 3,000 jobs and bring \$14 million annually to the Navajo Nation. Construction of this \$800 million resort begins this year, with full buildout by 2029. In 2024, a 421-acre resort lease was signed to enable this transformative project.
- Last year we successfully acquired Goulding's Lodge, projected to generate \$7 million in annual revenue starting February 2025. This project has already created more than 300 jobs for our people.
- In 2024, we acquired Horseman's Lodge, located in Flagstaff for use by our Gaming Enterprise. Navajo Gaming will install a limited number of gaming machines and reopen the restaurant. This project will bring 100 new jobs.

Every dollar of rent paid to the Navajo Nation from NNGE's lease with the Navajo Nation will benefit the Diné Relocatee Fund.

To address the ongoing economic impacts of COVID-19, DED provided over \$1M in lease abatements to support 10 struggling businesses.

This relief preserved jobs and maintained the business. 15 others were guided in resetting their financial and operational foundations for growth and long-term sustainability.

Admission to tribal parks and museums was up almost 30%. We had over 1.9 million visitors to the Navajo Tribal Parks last year - an increase from 1.5 million visitors in 2023 – with a



majority of visitors going to Lake Powell Tribal Park. Together, Navajo parks and the museum generated \$15.5 million in revenue.

Our Navajo Tax Commission generated \$140.7 million in tax revenue for the Navajo Nation—26% above projections, marking one of the highest annual collections in the Commission's history.

Much of this success is due to tourism. The Hotel Occupancy Tax alone exceeded initial estimates by 173%. This growth reflects my administration's efforts to rebuild the economy, attract visitors, and showcase the beauty of our Navajo Nation.

When I took office, I launched the 1,000 Homes Initiative, which has made significant progress with 474 finalized housing contracts using ARPA funds.

We have completed 6 new homes and have another \$10.8 million allocated for 84 homes in the Former Bennett Freeze Area, Navajo Partitioned Lands, and relocatee areas like Nahat'a Dziil. These three-bedroom homes average \$128,323.

We've also completed renovations for 6 homes in Shiprock, Rock Point, Lukachukai, Pinon, and Dilkon through the BIA HIP program— doubling last year's efforts—and delivered 7 manufactured homes using ARPA funds, with 10 more in progress.

Our Division of Community Development is building 360 modular homes using \$55.1 million in ARPA funds. CHID expects to produce an additional 272 homes in 2025.

The BIA HIP program will spend \$12.5 million of annual and ARPA funds to build 104 homes and renovate five. We received 870 applications this year, showing the urgent need for housing.

The Tuba City Regional Corporation Hospital also began construction in February with another 48 employee homes currently under construction.

We saw a 70% improvement in homesite lease approvals last year. In 2024, we approved about 1,200 homesite leases – this is an increase from 700 in 2023.

The Navajo Veterans Administration has fully encumbered its \$50 million ARPA allocation for new housing construction, prioritizing our veterans with the most need.

We were able to take contracts to build 50 homes at an outrageous price and renegotiate them to provide us with a total of 170 homes. And with those contracts in place, we are seeing some real progress.



We built 13 homes and renovated three. We held four key-turning ceremonies, and we will soon connect utilities for the rest of the homes. An additional 22 homes are under construction, and one renovation is in progress.

To honor our Navajo Code Talkers, we remodeled the home of the late Navajo Code Talker John Kinsel last year, ensuring his contributions are never forgotten.

Using the Housing Assistance Fund, we identified \$4.2 million to provide critical housing support for 75 Navajo veterans in 2025. These funds will go directly toward improving housing conditions, offering much-needed security and stability to veterans.

This year, our Navajo VA partnered with the Northern Arizona Veterans Administration Health Care System to reopen veteran clinics at IHS hospitals in Chinle and Kayenta, prioritizing mental health care.

The Fort Defiance Agency VA secured a grant to fund traditional healing ceremonies, reconnecting veterans with practices central to our Diné identity.

The Navajo VA delivered:

- Over \$20,000 in burial assistance to honor veterans and their families,
- \$15,000 for honor guard details to commemorate their service,
- \$4.1 million of the \$5.7 million Veterans Trust Fund directly supported veterans, surviving spouses, and Gold Star Mothers, and
- Helped over 80 veterans secure disability compensation, providing monthly benefits of \$4,000–\$5,000 based on individual needs

In partnership with the DCD and NECA 12) work orders have been issued to construct 449 bathroom additions for families in need. Of these, 321 are in progress.

As of December 2024:

- 251 bathroom additions are under construction.
- 128 bathroom additions are fully completed—an impressive increase from just 27 completed projects by the second quarter of FY2024.

Ensuring every Navajo family has access to clean, reliable water is one of my top priorities. We introduced two major water rights bills last year, the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act and the Navajo Nation Rio San José Stream System Water Rights Settlement Act, in Congress.



While no Indian Water Rights bills advanced, we will reintroduce both this year and continue pushing to safeguard the resources our communities rely on.

We've been working hard to ensure projects that have already been approved are completed. Yesterday, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Toutin announced an additional \$120 million to support the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, benefiting 43 Eastern Navajo Nation Chapters.

My thanks to Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez for her continued support and advocacy & other congressional champions who fight for Navajo.

In 2024, NECA and IHS connected 258 homes to water and wastewater systems while another 850 has been improved across Navajo.

Other construction began on three wastewater treatment plants in Kayenta, Chinle, and Shiprock, and launched nine major water projects, including the Aneth Water Treatment Arsenic Removal System, a water loading station, and two deep-water wells in Chilchinbeto and Tsaile.

NTUA also extended waterlines and septic systems to 109 families, installed 29 water cisterns and septic systems, replaced the Dilkon Waterline Booster Station and placed Lower Greasewood Water Treatment Plant in service.

In 2025, NTUA will continue to bring water infrastructure to 575 more homes. Our Department of Water Resources repaired 754 windmills in 2024, supporting ranchers and farmers, and constructed 26 miles of water pipelines—up 37% from the previous year. In 2025, DWR will repair 700 more windmills and double pipeline construction to 53 miles.

Two transformative projects broke ground:

- The Beacon Bisti Water Project, a \$7 million initiative will bring clean water to over 6,800 residents in 8 communities with a 46-mile pipeline, part of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.
- The Tohajilee Waterline Project, a \$20 million effort to build a 7.5-mile pipeline connecting Tohajilee's 1,600 residents to Albuquerque's water system, replacing a failing well system this year.

We are also working hard to ensure every household in our Nation has access to electricity.



- In 2024, NTUA provided electric service to a total of 813 families and built nearly 58 miles of powerlines under the Light Up Navajo initiative. We expect even more progress in 2025, with plans to build or upgrade seven substations and to make new investments in solar off-grid systems.
- 22 homes in Thoreau and 7 in Naschitti will soon receive power with grant funds. A powerline expansion in Indian Wells will meet residential and commercial needs, and projects in Dilkon and Greasewood will connect 39 more households.
- We also closed out a HUD grant for the Aneth Scattered Powerline Project, serving 13 homes. A major federal award with local matching funds will bring power to 114 households across eight communities, adding 51 miles of new electrical lines.
- Our farmers and ranchers are vital to our economy.
- Last year, we engaged with Bashas' leadership to address food deserts on the Nation, where only 13 grocery stores serve our communities. We explored ways for local farmers and ranchers to supply their stores. Bashas' hosted its first grocery vendor summit, bringing 50 local businesses, grocers, producers, and suppliers.
- We partnered with Diné College and the USDA to revive the wool and mohair purchasing event. We offered a \$0.70 per pound incentive.

Over four days, 641 producers brought nearly 150,000 pounds, earning \$118,000.

- We reinstated the equine reward program to address the overpopulation of feral horses, which now exceeds 80,000.
- In February, we hired Dr. David Manuelito from Tohatchi as the Nation's first permanent veterinarian in over two years, filling a critical gap.
- We will also put \$110 million from the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund Program into fencing and training projects in 2025.

In 2024, we improved educational facilities, expanded opportunities, and addressed student safety and well-being.

We approved \$5 million in funding to expand Utah State University's academic facility in Monument Valley. Groundbreaking ceremonies were also held at Tohatchi High School, Crystal Boarding School, and Many Farms Lobo School demonstrating our focus on providing safe, modern learning environments.



We also helped fund a \$10 million dormitory at Navajo Prep for a 13,724-square-foot facility which will house 32 students this school year.

In March, we successfully converted 163 Head Start-Preschool slots into Early Head Start-Toddler slots, expanding access to quality education for our youngest learners. These efforts were complemented by the \$24.2 million secured in September to replace playground equipment at 16 childcare centers.

The opening of the Crownpoint Youth Center in Sept. 2024 marks a milestone for youth engagement, offering programs for personal development and recreation. Meanwhile, the Tuba City Youth Complex is in progress and Chinle has withdrawn 30 acres for its complex.

With funding from the FCC's E-Rate program, we connected 16 Chapter houses and 11 Head Start programs to a fiber internet connection. Our crews are working hard with Sacred Wind Communications and our Land Department to install the technologies necessary to ensure our students succeed.

We will work with SWC & NNLD to ensure 27 additional chapters and 11 Head Starts have fiber construction completed by June 2025.

I am continuing to prioritize the Navajo language. I established Diné Bizaad Teachers Day on October 18 to celebrate our language and educators. But this is just the beginning.

Today I will sign an Executive Order directing that all written government documents include at least one word or phrase in Diné Bizaad and that investments be made for non-Diné Bizaad speaking Navajo Nation staff to learn our language.

We have made progress in improving law enforcement facilities and expanding police presence across the Nation.

- On October 24 and December 11, we replaced the outdated detention centers in Window Rock and Shiprock with modern 60-by-100-foot modular facilities, addressing the health and safety concerns for both inmates and staff, and replacing structures originally built in the 1950s.
- To combat rising criminal activity, Navajo Police established a Northern Area Field Office in an unused Aneth Chapter facility, expanding police presence and allowing for patrol and emergency response.



- A new Eastern Field Office was created at the Dzil Nahoodilii (DZ) NPD Substation near Nageezi, NM. This initiative marks the first phase of District 8 police operations, which will be fully staffed with commanders, officers, and administrative support by the end of FY 2025.
- Plans are underway to establish a Navajo Regional Training Center in Page, which will support fire, corrections, police, and EMS programs, enhancing professional development opportunities for our law enforcement.

Police officer recruitment remains a significant challenge for our Nation. The number of officers has decreased from 201 to 178 across our seven districts. Although 19 new recruits graduated in 2024, it is still insufficient to meet the safety needs of our communities.

My administration urges more young people to consider careers in law enforcement, including those who may not pursue full police training but can serve as citizen police officers.

In 2024, our Department of Emergency Management secured \$275,000 in FEMA reimbursements for local chapter houses. DEM also provided emergency resources to 17 chapters across our lands, assisting over 40,000 people.

I have worked to strengthen fire and rescue services. In 2017, only 8 officials served our vast lands; by 2023, this number increased to 20, and 6 more were added in 2024, totaling 26. Each addition safeguards our people and communities.

I also acknowledge our 23 dedicated Navajo Scouts who are bravely assisting the efforts in Los Angeles County. We pray for their safe return after supporting our relatives in Southern California.

We have taken steps to help eliminate jurisdictional gaps by establishing strong partnerships with surrounding law enforcement agencies. We have seven (7) agreements in place with agencies including Apache County, McKinley County, Socorro County, among others.

We completed negotiations with the Hopi Tribe and Navajo County, and actively working on agreements with Arizona DPS, Coconino County, and the City of Gallup.

Navajo DEM, partnering with American Red Cross and the School Safety Task Force, offers a School Safety-Emergency Preparedness course for students K-12. This free course teaches vital preparedness skills for home fires and local hazards.



This year, we brought on 2 additional animal control officers, expanding our team to a total of 9.

These officers travel more than 400 miles daily to cover vast areas of our Nation. Our three (3) operating animal control centers—located in Fort Defiance, Shiprock, and Tuba City—are critical resources for addressing animal-related issues across the Navajo Nation.

I am happy to announce construction will begin this summer on a new animal control facility in Crownpoint, to be completed in 2026 and increasing our capacity to manage animal control in Eastern Agency.

During my administration, we strengthened relationships with federal leaders, including Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su. I joined her here in Tuba City as she announced \$13 million for job training, among others.

I testified five times to Congress this past year on veterans' affairs, infrastructure, water rights, investing in sustainable infrastructure, and advocated for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project Amendments Act.

Our Navajo Department of Justice works hard in the courts to protect our interests.

We won the *Clark v. Haaland* case in the 10th Circuit in November of 2024 protecting the Nation's sovereignty and affirming our water rights. The Nation continues to fight to protect Bears Ears, where an appellate case is pending in the 10th Circuit.

Having participated in the Nation-wide opioid litigation, the Nation has received over \$80.7 million in compensation, and we expect an additional \$84.7 million over the next few years.

We have taken steps to modernize our government, streamline hiring processes, and improve efficiency.

The new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is now being implemented to streamline finance, procurement and human resources.

Our Department of Personnel Management also launched our online application portal in September 2024, simplifying the job application process.

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Last year, 2,992 job vacancies were posted, 7,557 applications were received, and 753 positions were filled. Since the launch of the online portal, 2,355 applications were submitted, enabling hiring programs to be completed within five days.



Our Department of Information Technology also used \$6 million in ARPA funds to strengthen the Nation's cybersecurity, safeguarding approximately 5,000 users.

In 2024, our Navajo Broadband Office developed a “Broadband Infrastructure Expansion Plan” to construct 78 new towers and extend 1,526 miles of fiber network, aiming to serve 35,000 homes at an estimated cost of \$271 million.

ARPA funds also enabled upgrades to 33 sites with 4G capabilities across the Nation.

In 2025, NNBBBO will secure at least \$200 million in BEAD funding from Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Over \$3 million has been allocated to Diné College and Navajo Technical University to support students with essential connectivity for academic success.

Additionally, \$528,000 will be invested to connect more than 50-chapter locations using Low Earth Orbit satellite technology.

In 2024, one of Navajo EPAs key achievement was the swift removal of asbestos at the Navajo Forest Products Industries site in September 2024.

Shortly after, we celebrated the listing of the Lukachukai Mountain Mining District on the Superfund National Priorities List, which opens federal funding for long-overdue cleanup in a mining-affected area.

Addressing the illegal transportation of uranium, I signed a legislation that requires an agreement before transporting uranium on through the reservation.

As President, I will advocate for federal regulations that align with tribal laws, ensuring no radioactive materials cross Diné lands without our knowledge.

Senior centers play a vital role in supporting our elders. We've made progress in opening new centers and renovating existing ones.

The Tselani/Cottonwood Senior Center, a \$3.27 million, 4,000-square-foot facility, opened on June 28, 2024, serving 380+ community members. Nation-wide, \$184 million in Sihasin Funds supports senior center projects, with \$148 million funding 87 projects. The Department of Health assessed 15 major construction projects and completed renovations on 64 centers.

In January 2024, the Pueblo Pintado Senior Center began serving 81 seniors daily, and the Ganado Senior/Veteran Center continues operations. Renovations funded by NM House Bill 308 in Tohajilee, Baca Prewitt, Ramah, Chichiltah, and Crownpoint are set to finish by 2025.

By mid-2025, we aim to expand nutrition programs, launch a senior-youth mentorship program, and create virtual activities for seniors with mobility challenges.



Our Facilities Maintenance Department was allocated \$16 million four years ago to make Navajo government facilities compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

We secured two contractors and begin making \$4.1 million in upgrades at Chinle, Fort Defiance and Shiprock. Going into 2025, we will spend an additional \$12 million on ADA projects.

In 2025, we plan on supporting projects at the Tuba City Senior Center and Gadii'ahi Complex.

To support Urban Diné relatives, our Navajo divisions and programs is working to secure the purchase of a medical facility in Phoenix to offer services to Navajo citizens living in the metro area. The goal is to have the facility accredited, fully staffed, and operational, providing comprehensive services by 2026.

I am happy to report we finalized the site for the new Gallup Indian Medical Center in Gamerco, invested \$8.1 million in the Chinle Airstrip to improve emergency transportation, and we are broke ground on a \$200 million Echo Cliffs Healthcare Center in Bodaway-Gap, in Western Navajo. This new facility will bring medical services closer to our people and have a \$1 billion economic impact.

Our Department of Health distributed over 29,000 food packages to community members, including items like blue corn and Navajo tea. In 2025 we expect to feed 5,000 more people than last year.

Our WIC program served 12,000 families and distributed \$4 million in benefits. They also provided breastfeeding support to 2,000 Navajo mothers through workshops and one-on-one counseling.

Our Community Health Representative Program conducted nearly 25,000 vital sign checks and served 11,000 individuals across 110 chapters. In 2025, the CHR program will establish telehealth support hubs to reach even more patients across the Nation.

Last year, the Special Diabetes Program hosted 1,200 diabetes prevention workshops, engaging 8,000 Navajo participants. They enrolled 1,500 individuals in physical activity programs. Next year, we hope to develop mobile health units and travel to those who need us the most.

Our behavioral health and mental services team delivered 1,198 clinical services to clients last year and engaged 33,419 participants in meaningful outreach to address mental health



awareness and early intervention. They also provided traditional services to nearly 500 clients, offering smudging, prayers, and cultural education.

In 2024, the Department of Health treated 2,000 individuals for opioid use disorder across 15 chapters. We are also focused on prevention with opioid recovery peer support groups and regular community education workshops.

In 2025, DOH will launch two new treatment facilities, one in a rural chapter and another in an urban area. The Navajo Treatment Center for Children and Their Families Program provides outpatient mental health therapy to 9,214, an increase from 2023.

In 2024, our Department for Child Care & Development (DCCD) provided over \$470,000 in subsidy payments allowing the parents of 567 children to go to school or work. DCCD also invested nearly \$9.5 million in direct services to lay the groundwork for even more families to access quality childcare services.

The Division of Self Reliance provided almost \$13 million in assistance to over 21,000 families including 13,000 adults and nearly 42,000 children.

In 2024, the Navajo Department of Family Services (DFS) partnered with seven facilities for residential and emergency shelter care services, investing over \$4 million.

The department served over 7,000 clients, including over 6,000 children and 1,000 adults, and responded to 2,600 reports of abuse or neglect involving children and elders.

We also provided financial assistance to our families with the most need paying:

- \$1 million in 2024 in Low Income Home Energy Assistance
- \$1.25 million in school clothing
- \$1.2 million in Burial Assistance
- \$434,700 in Community Service Block Grants

We are actively working to pave the way for durable roads that reduce travel times and improve safety.

Our Navajo Washington Office secured \$2 million in congressional earmarks for road construction in the Navajo Mountain and Oljato chapters, which was included in the draft FY25 Budget, which we expect Congress to pass in the coming months.

The N35 Sweetwater Highway construction is nearing 80% completion and paving is set to begin in March.



For 2025, Navajo DOT announced that it will prioritize \$144.6 million in road plans including: contracting 9 road construction projects at 9 sites - Newcomb, Toadlena, Wheatfields Lake, Blue Canyon, Many Farms, Alamo, Tuba City, Greasewood Cornfields-Burnside and Red Valley.

In addition, Navajo DOT will be applying for bridge construction funding for 71 bridges across Navajo. Beyond 2025, the estimate FHWA road construction projects for 2026 is \$146,750,000.00.

From 2013-2024, Navajo DOT contracted \$153,525,737.69 in federal highway road construction contracts.

Finally, this year we will be working with the Controller to develop an ambitious plan to borrow \$1 billion of our own money to invest into our communities and to stimulate our economy. We have to start investing in ourselves.

We have an impressive trillion-dollar investment portfolio, but if we don't have an economy or if our Navajo people keep leaving the Nation, this portfolio means nothing. Every leader talks about sovereignty. Using our own money and allowing it to work for us is the ultimate exercise of sovereignty.

Everything we accomplished last year and everything we strive to achieve in the year ahead is rooted in using our sovereignty to help our people.

Sovereignty is the inherent right of a nation to govern itself. While we value our government-to-government relationship with the United States, we know best how to address the needs of our people. It is our responsibility, through elected leaders in Window Rock, to build homes, pave roads, create jobs, educate our youth, and preserve the Navajo language as a vibrant part of our identity.

As President of the Navajo Nation, I will always fight to secure the resources our people need to thrive and build a brighter future.

Thank you for your support and for attending the People's State of the Nation.

