



Navajo Nation Washington Office

Wááshindoon Weekly

Friday, October 3, 2022

Executive Director's Corner



Yá'át'ééh

We started our week hosting a reception for newly confirmed Director of Indian Health Service Roselyn Tso and welcoming President Nez who came to DC to attend her swearing in.

As we kept our eyes on the progress of appropriations legislation, we also looked south as Hurricane Ian bore down on Florida. Watching yet another natural disaster reminds us of the importance of our work in preparing our communities when Mother Nature tests us.

We know that as the pandemic raged our Navajo people were challenged with having enough healthy food at a time when some of the things that support our economy were closed. The pandemic also punctuated the need for infrastructure, including the internet as all of our students didn't have access to online learning.

So this week when we were visited by an organization that works to help feed people amid the backdrop of the first White House food conference in decades and by representatives from Navajo Preparatory School working to increase access to technology for their students, we were encouraged by long-awaited attention to some of our long-standing issues.

We also focused on healthcare as we attended the National Indian Health Board's conference and welcomed visitors from Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation here to attend the conference and advocate for better healthcare in Indian Country.

It's raining nonstop in DC as we receive a little of what's left from Hurricane Ian. We hold those impacted by this fierce storm in our thoughts and wish them swift relief and best wishes in rebuilding their communities.

Please enjoy this week's issue of the *Wááshindoon Weekly!*

Ahéhee'
Lashawna R. Tso

Weekly Updates

NIHB Celebrates 50 Year Anniversary



NIHB's Annual Conference attracted high level cabinet officials including VA Secretary Denis McDonough (center). Photo courtesy of NNWO.

This week the National Indian Health Board hosted their 50th Annual conference known as the National Tribal Health Conference (NTHC) focusing on exploring health policy and its impact on tribes, advancing Tribal capacity to expand policy work, and serving as a forum to discuss policy and political work in the arenas of Tribal health care, public, behavioral, and environmental health.

The conference featured a variety of panels, work sessions, and Tribal consultations with Federal agencies to address many of the health disparities faced in Indian Country. Panels discussing health equity concentrated on the disparities that marginalized communities face and long-term solutions to guarantee a more equitable healthcare future for all.

NIHB CEO Stacy Bohlen spoke at the conference to address the concerns of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs), highlighting the necessity of major legislative and systemic change to enable health equity. According to Bohlen, past trauma and relationships with the US government have created a "perfect storm" that has left Tribal communities exposed to the devastation of COVID-19 and other public health emergencies.

Bohlen stressed the significance of changing policies in order to improve access for AI/ANs. She commented, "[Tribes] don't have access to the Federal Emergency Public Health Fund--Tribes do not have direct access to that to this day," she said, citing how the Tribal COVID-19 response was hindered by this. She asserted that this could be changed by Congressional action. Through the "CDC Tribal Public Health Security and Preparedness Act," the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would accept direct applications from tribes and Tribal organizations for the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program funding. For the time being, only states and some local organizations are eligible to apply for PHEP money to deal with crises in public health like COVID-19.

CR Prevents Government Shutdown



On Friday, September 30, the House passed a bill to keep the government open past the end of FY 2022. The action, commonly called a continuing resolution, extends current levels of spending on all normal government programs until December 16th, allowing Congress more time to negotiate the normal appropriations package. The bill also included \$12.4 billion in aid to Ukraine to defend itself against Russia as well as \$18.8 billion for domestic disaster recovery efforts, including Western wildfires, floods in Kentucky and hurricanes in the Southeast, along with other natural disasters.

The bill passed the House in a 230-201 vote, including ten Republicans who supported the measure despite official opposition by their party. It passed the Senate on Thursday night in a 72 to 25 vote after Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) dropped an amendment that would have substantially changed the rules surrounding environmental regulations for large energy projects. Other Democratic senators expressed their opposition to the Manchin amendment because of the potential harm it could have on the environment, with Senator Bernie Sanders (D-VT) promising to block the amendment even if it

resulted in a government shutdown. Republican opposition to the measure was summed up by the House Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA) who said Republicans should not reward the Democrats with their support after Democrats “refused to negotiate” with Republicans on issues like “runaway inflation, the supply chain crisis, the border crisis, or the opioid deaths associated with drugs like fentanyl coming across our open southern border.”

Congress normally appropriates money to be spent during the Federal fiscal year beginning on October 1 and ending on September 30. This means that most government operations have to stop at the end of the fiscal year unless there is new congressional authorization to continue. Ideally this authorization comes in the form of a new budget with supporting appropriations, but in practice Congress rarely passes the full budget on time. As was once again true this year, the threat of a government shutdown was enough to drop the Manchin amendment and to pass something to buy more time to negotiate a real budget. In terms of its impact on the Navajo Nation, programs funded through grants should remain largely unaffected, though there is the possibility that funding for new grants will be delayed. All other programs funded by regular Federal expenditures will be extended at previous funding levels.

Focus on Food Security this Week in DC



AmpleHarvest.org connects small scale gardeners with local food pantries. Photo courtesy of AmpleHarvest.org

On Thursday, September 29, NNWO was visited by Mr. Gary Oppenheimer, Founder and Executive Director of **AmpleHarvest.org**, a non-profit organization that links backyard gardeners to local food pantries using digital technology. His visit coincided with recently unveiled White House initiatives to address food insecurity.

AmpleHarvest.org began as an effort by Oppenheimer 12 years ago to distribute the excess produce grown by individual gardeners to those in need, eliminating the need for cold storage or long transports. It's an elegant and simple. Local gardeners who typically grow more than what they use for personal and family consumption register

with AmpleHarvest.org and the organization serves as a conduit between gardeners and distribution points, ensuring that scheduled drops of fresh fruits and vegetables coincide closely with the times consumers come by and collect it—thus protecting the anonymity of both donor and recipient—and eliminating wasted food.

AmpleHarvest.org has impacted 4,000 communities in 50 states and distributed to 8,000 food pantries. Mr. Oppenheimer visited NNWO to share his organization’s mission and vision and to learn about ways the program might work on the Navajo Nation.

The vast majority of food aid in Indian Country comes from non-profit and faith-based organizations. Food aid from the Federal perspective is generally through USDA commodities, but Tribal communities are increasingly wanting healthier foods that not only come from local growers, but are culturally appropriate and grown in ways that don’t present threats to wildlife or the environment.

According to non-governmental organization (NGO) **Move for Hunger** approximately one in four Native Americans experiences food insecurity as opposed to one in nine Americans overall. There are only a handful of Federal initiatives to address food insecurity in Indian Country.

Closer to the Navajo Nation, there are 28 counties in America that are majority Native American, and 18 of those counties are considered **high food insecurity counties**. A large portion of this stems from above average unemployment and poverty in Tribal communities. Apache County, Arizona, home to the Navajo Nation, has an overall 22% food insecurity rate, the highest out of any majority Native American county in the United States.

Food security was addressed by the Biden-Harris Administration this week when they hosted the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health on September 28, 2022. This was the first such meeting in over 50 years. In parallel with the conference, they announced a **National Strategy** that identifies steps the government will take and catalyzes the public and private sectors to address the intersections between food, hunger, nutrition, and health.

The strategy contains five pillars that define the strategy and identify actions that can be taken by the Federal government, local, state, territorial, Tribal governments, nonprofit and community groups, and the private sector.

White House officials have secured \$8 billion of public and private sector commitments toward helping provide more food and better nutrition by 2030. “This goal is within our reach — just look at how far we’ve come on child poverty,” Biden said during a morning session of the conference.

Tuba City Healthcare Representatives Meet with NNWO



(Left to Right) Government and Legislative Affairs Associate Justin Ahasteen, TCRHCC Board Vice President Franklinb Fowler, TCRHCC Board President Christopher Curley, TCRHCC Associate Executive Officer Joette Walters, TCRHCC Board Member and Navajo Hopi Health Foundation President Thomas McCabe and NNWO Executive Director Lashawna Tso.

This week leadership from the Tuba City Regional health Care Corporation (TCRHCC) and Navajo Hopi Health Foundation (NHHF) visited NNWO to share what they discussed with their members of Congress and Centers for Medical and Medicare Services about funding initiatives to support innovations in Tribal healthcare delivery. TCRHCC is the first and only provider of cancer treatment on any Indian reservation in the United States.

While in Washington DC, TCRHCC leaders attended the annual National Indian Health Board conference, the swearing in of Roselyn Tso as the new head of Indian Health Service, and meetings with House and Senate offices that share responsibility for crafting healthcare policies in Indian Country. TCRHCC Board President, Chris Curley said that their stop by NNWO was a highlight and that TCRHCC looks forward to this new era of working in partnership with NNWO on behalf of the Navajo people.

Elite Navajo School Representatives Come to NNWO



Shawna Allison Becenti, Head of School, Navajo Preparatory School; Lashawna Tso, NNWO Executive Director; Keith Neil, Sean Bekis, IT; Darah Tabrum, Teacher. Photo courtesy of NNWO.

Staff from the Navajo Preparatory School (Navajo Prep) visited the Navajo Nation Washington Office this week as part of their trip to Washington D.C. for the National Digital Equity Summit hosted by Department of Education. Shawna Becenti, Head of School, presented on a panel on the IT challenges Navajo Prep faced during COVID-19 pandemic and challenges faced by students due to a lack of broadband or internet services on the reservation. With limited or non-existent internet services, Navajo Prep was able to utilize the limited technology as a part of their teaching curriculum for students who live in the most rural areas of Navajo Reservation.

Ms. Becenti and her team visited some of the New Mexico Congressional members to advocate for funding for renovation of two different buildings (the educational building and residential housing) and also for safety, security and infrastructure. Other areas of advocacy included an increase in per student funding. The national average per student funding is \$14,000 and for Navajo Prep it is \$6,200. Navajo Prep also requested help in increasing enrollment. Limited space and facilities makes it impossible to accommodate the number of applicants and the waitlist for entrance is extremely long.

Navajo Prep is a private Tribally-controlled Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) grant school, authorized by the Navajo Nation. Navajo Prep was established in 1991 by the Education Committee of the Navajo Nation Council for the purpose of offering a college preparatory program for Native high school students and producing leaders for the Navajo Nation.

Tribal Consultations

Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Prisoners is holding a series of Tribal consultations regarding the Tribal Prisoner Program

[October 3, 2022](#)

[October 6, 2022](#)

Small Business Administration is holding a Tribal Consultation regarding Forthcoming Proposed Revisions to the 8(a) Business Development Program regulations

[October 5, 2022](#)

The Arizona Care Cost Containment System is holding a Tribal consultation on the State Plan Amendment regarding AZ's Voluntary Certification for Community Health Workers with IHS, 6638 Programs and Urban Indian Organizations

[October 5, 2022](#)

Environment Protection Agency is holding a listening session regarding the establishment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

[October 18, 2022](#)

Grant Opportunities

Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program

The U.S. Department of Energy has \$2 billion in loans and loan guarantees available exclusively for Tribes for energy projects to support economic development. The program has recently expanded to offer direct loans to Tribes.

[More Information](#)

Power Unelectrified Tribal Buildings

Indian Energy Policy and Programs (Office of Indian Energy) issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to release a \$15 million Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) this summer to support powering unelectrified Tribal buildings.

[More Information](#)

Community Wildfire Defense Grant 2022 Tribes

Assist at-risk local communities and Indian Tribes with planning and mitigating against the risk created by Wildfire. It prioritizes at-risk communities in an area identified as having high or very high wildfire hazard potential, are low-income, and/or have been impacted by severe disaster. **Deadline: October 7, 2022**

[More Information](#)

Deploy Energy Infrastructure on Tribal lands

Office of Indian Energy intends to solicit applications from Indian tribes including Alaska Native Regional Corporations and Village Corporations, Intertribal Organizations, and Tribal Energy Development Organizations, to install clean energy generating system(s) and/or energy efficiency measure(s) for Tribal building(s); or, deploy community-scale clean energy generating system(s) or energy storage on Tribal Lands; or install integrated energy system(s) for autonomous operation (independent of the traditional centralized electric power grid) to power a single or multiple essential Tribal facilities during emergency situations or for Tribal community resilience.

[Visit our Website](#)

Indian Community Development Block Grant Program

The primary objective of the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) program is the development of viable Indian and Alaska Native communities, including the creation of decent housing, suitable living environments, and economic opportunities primarily for persons of low-and moderate-incomes. **Application Portal Opens October 24, 2022.**

[More Information](#)

From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals

The primary goal of the Program is to enable higher education institutions to build and sustain the next generation of the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences workforce including the future USDA workforce primarily through providing student scholarship support, meaningful paid internships, fellowships and job opportunity matching, and also facilitating opportunities to learn the processes and pathways leading to training and employment in the federal sector. **Deadline: October 25, 2022.**

Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) appropriated \$2 billion to Treasury to provide payments to eligible revenue sharing counties and eligible Tribal governments for use on any governmental purpose except for a lobbying activity. **Deadline: October 31, 2022.**

[More Information](#)

The Affordable Connectivity Program

The Affordable Connectivity Program is an FCC benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more. The benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.

[More Information](#)

Indian Housing Block Grant Competitive Grant Program

Under the program, eligible Indian Tribes and tribally designated housing entities receive grants to carry out a range of affordable housing activities. Grant funds may be used to develop, maintain, and operate affordable housing in safe and healthy environments on Indian reservations and in other Indian areas and carry out other affordable housing activities. Grant funds must be used to primarily benefit low-income Indian families. **Deadline: November 17, 2022**

[More Information](#)

FY 2023 AmeriCorps State and National Native Nations Grants

AmeriCorps seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources into disaster services like COVID-19 response, economic opportunities, education, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Indigenous language, civic and social engagement, healthy futures and veterans and military families. Opportunities include three-year operating grants which engage AmeriCorps members in timelimited-service commitments and one-year planning grants to develop programs that implement evidence-based solutions to community needs.

Deadline: April 5, 2023

[More Information](#)

Additional News and Updates

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS or the Department) is issuing this proposed rule on Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (Section 1557). Section 1557 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in certain health programs and activities. Section 1557(c) of the ACA authorizes the Secretary of the Department to promulgate regulations to implement the nondiscrimination requirements of Section 1557. Comments due by **October 3, 2022**.

[More Information](#)

Notice of Establishment of the Tribal Homeland Security Advisory Council; Solicitation of Inaugural Members

The Department of Homeland Security, through the Office of Partnership and Engagement, is establishing the Tribal Homeland Security Advisory Council (THSAC). The goal of the THSAC is to provide recommendations on policies, programs, and initiatives that the Department is undertaking that have implications for tribes and Tribal Nations. The Office of Partnership and Engagement seeks inaugural members of the THSAC. Applications will be accepted until **October 10, 2022**.

[More Information](#)

Request for Public Comment:

Urban Indian Organization On-Site Review

In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Indian Health Service (IHS) invites the general public to comment on a new information collection titled, "Urban Indian Organization On-Site Review." Tribal leaders are invited to join US Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm for nation to nation roundtable discussion of a key question: How can the US Department of Energy strengthen tribal energy sovereignty? The Summit is an opportunity for tribal leaders and key energy partners to discuss how to make more progress toward tribal clean energy goals.

[More Information](#)

2022 AISES National Conference

October 6-8, 2022

The annual AISES National Conference is a unique, three-day event focusing on educational, professional, and workforce development for Indigenous peoples of North America and the Pacific Islands in STEM studies and careers.

[More Information](#)

NDN Changemaker Fellowship

October 21, 2022

The NDN Changemaker Fellowship is a 12-month opportunity for Indigenous leaders to articulate their vision for social change, to identify the IHS is requesting the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve this new collection. Consideration will be given to all comments received by **October 11, 2022**.

[More Information](#)

support they will need to get there and to invest in their own personal development and wellbeing. Now accepting applications.

[More Information](#)

Agency Information Collection Activities: Tribal Enrollment Count

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, we, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), are proposing to reinstate a previously approved information collection. Interested persons are invited to submit comments before **October 17, 2022**.

[More Information](#)

The Election is two months away, but it's not too late to register even if you live off Rez

Register to Vote:

Currently open and last day to Register was September 30, 2022

Request for mail in ballot:

Currently you can request now; You can retrieve form for request here: <https://navajoelections.navajo-nsn.gov/Forms>

Deadline to request is **October 10, 2022** 5:00 PM (MST)

Mail-in ballots need to be post marked by October 17, 2022; on the mail-in ballot request form, there are address and phone numbers for more information.

The mail-in ballot will need to be sent to agency area.

For more information call Navajo Election Administration at 1-800-775-8683

We're Hiring!

Are you a great communicator? Are you looking to make a difference in the lives of the Navajo people? Join our team at NNWO.

Government and Legislative Communications Officer

NNWO serves as the Navajo Nation's advocate with Congress, the White House, and federal agencies. We monitor and analyze congressional legislation, disseminate information on emerging topics of concern, and we develop strategies and decisions concerning national policies and budgets affecting the Navajo Nation.

For more information on the information provided in this newsletter, please contact NNWO at info@nnwo.org.

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