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Navajo Nation President signs resolution to reopen schools for in-person learning

Legislation that permitted online-only learning rescinded



Acting Superintendent Patricia Gonnig addresses the crowd at the signing ceremony for Resolution CJN-36-21 at Window Rock Tribal Park on July 6. The resolution allows schools to reopen for in-person instruction for the Fall 2021 semester. Photo by OPVP

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer signed Resolution CJN-36-21 into law at a ceremony Tuesday, lifting several COVID-19 restrictions put into place in 2020, including legislation that restricted learning in Navajo Nation schools to online-only environments.

Resolution CJN-36-21 was sponsored by Council Delegate Carl Slater and approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council during a June 25 special meeting. The resolution repeals eight COVID-19 related legislations previously approved by the Council when the Navajo Nation was experiencing the peak of new COVID-19 infections in 2020. This includes Resolution CO-84-20, which previously opposed in-person school instruction due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The approval of Resolution CJN-36-21 allows in-person learning to resume at Navajo Nation schools, in accordance with a safety plan that is required by the Department of Diné Education (DODE). All schools on the Navajo Nation offering in-person instruction must comply with the COVID-19 safety protocols established by the Navajo Board of Education and DODE as well as any applicable Public Health Orders.

The Navajo Department of Health issued two new Public Health Emergency Orders on July 6. One of the orders, Health Emergency Order No. 2021-014, declares “yellow status” for schools to reopen under the Navajo Nation’s COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework available online at <https://www.navajoreopening.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19-Safe-Schools-Framework>.

“Two-hundred schools here located on Navajo will have an opportunity to reopen their doors safely for our children. They will be receiving students in the fall semester,” Acting Superintendent Patricia Gonne said during the ceremony. “I do encourage today that our parents, grandparents continue to work closely with their local schools to understand how they plan to safely reopen. The Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan is comprehensive, and it is based on parental choice.”

Navajo Nation schools must have submitted their reopening plans and attestation form to DODE to receive recommendations on whether they should reopen.

For more information on the reopening process, including the full approved reopening plan and required documents, visit <https://www.navajonationdode.org/navajoschoolreopening/>.