PRESS RELEASE

The Zuni Pueblo Demands Fair Distribution of Impact Aid Funding for Zuni Students

Zuni, New Mexico—Zuni Pueblo Governor Val Panteah and the Zuni Tribal Council stand united and firm in demanding 100% of their distribution of Impact Aid funding for their Zuni students in the state of New Mexico.

“The Zuni Pueblo strongly supports the Zuni Public School District and its efforts demands that the State of New Mexico allow the Zuni Public School District to keep 100% of the Impact Aid funds. Our students generate that money and it should rightfully stay with Zuni Public School District. Why is it that three school districts (Gallup McKinley, Central Consolidated and Zuni) contribute 75% of the total Impact Aid money that goes into the State Equalization Guarantee? This is wrong and unfair to our students. For far too long, the State of New Mexico has taken advantage of our students and other school districts with Native Students by taking credit for 75% and only allows those School Districts to keep 25%” said Governor Panteah. “Impact Aid dollars should be provided to our school district to adequately fund school operation, maintenance, capital outlay, culturally appropriate learning, language programs, and educational resources. I commend Senators Clemente Sanchez and George Munoz and Representative Eliseo Alcon for having the courage to bring this matter in front of their peers and move this forward.”

Governor Panteah and the Zuni Tribal Council recognize that the New Mexico State Legislature have long debated and even discussed this issue with promises to fix the problem. However, it has never been given the due attention until now. “We are glad that other tribes, school districts, and school boards are collaborating together to fight for what is right and just for our students,” Governor Panteah noted. It is imperative that we A:Shiwi (Zuni) stand together as we have in the past to fight for our future, which is our students. The federal government has done the right thing by offsetting the taxes that we cannot generate by granting Impact Funds to the district.

The Zuni Pueblo Governor and the Zuni Tribal Council are determined to make sure that their voices are heard. Therefore, they feel that the New Mexico Legislature needs to put aside their past lack of attention to the issue and finally put this issue to rest. The Pueblo of Zuni recognizes that the State of New Mexico has an opportunity to address the Zuni Capital Lawsuit by allowing all districts that apply for Impact Aid to keep 100% of that money. “This would allow us (A:Shiwi-Zuni) to get to the starting line where everyone else has been. This would make it fair! We, the Zuni Tribe, encourage the New Mexico State Legislature and the new Governor to right a wrong.”

Currently, Senate Bill 170 advanced from the Senate Education Committee to the Senate Finance Committee that would phase out the removal of the 75-percent credit taken for Impact Aid funding over a
three-year period. There are also two similar bills in the house that got tabled by the House education committee. In either case, the four bills would allow the local school districts (that apply for the Impact Aid monies) to keep or retain their Impact Aid monies at the district level moving forward. The State of New Mexico would no longer take credit through the state equalization guarantee. These bills seek to equalize what has been traditionally the unequal distribution of resources generated by native students to schools throughout New Mexico.