



Press Release

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Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes received a total of \$63.4 million in COVID-19 relief funds

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Governor Reggie Wassana announced the receipt of \$63.4 million to help meet tribal needs during the coronavirus pandemic.

The funds came in three separate disbursements from the U.S. Treasury Department: \$54.9 million on May 7, \$7.2 million on June 16 and \$2.3 million on June 19, 2020. The funds were provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) passed by Congress on April 22, 2020. The CARES Act set aside \$8 billion specifically for tribes.

The amount of funding received by each tribe was determined by using the Indian Housing Block Grant population data.

“The Tribes are grateful for this money and overall amount we have received. Like all of the other tribes across the country, we closed our casinos in mid-March for two months to help stop the spread of COVID-19,” Gov. Wassana said. “During this time, we had zero revenue coming in but were still incurring all of the same expenses including keeping our employees paid. We have to keep our community safe until this is over – the need for this CARES Act money is huge and very timely.”

During the open comment period with the U.S. Departments of Treasury and Interior, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes advocated for flexible rules for how the CRF funding could be used. Nonetheless, the treasury department has issued strict guidelines governing the use of the funds and they send out updates on their guidance regularly.

“The Tribes have many needs as a result of COVID-19. These funds must be used for COVID-19 related matters. Some people believe we can spend the money on

anything we want. However, this money is restricted to COVID-19 needs as the federal government mandated,” said Gov. Wassana.

Executive branch staff have been meeting regularly with the tribal legislators to develop CARES Act budgets for all of the branches, departments and programs. One of the first things the Tribes did to address the immediate needs of tribal citizens that were affected by COVID-19 was to create a Tribal COVID-19 Disaster Assistance Program in which enrolled tribal citizens 18 and older could apply for COVID-19 assistance up to \$500 and \$300 for each enrolled child.

The remaining funds will be used in accordance with the CARES Act: to prevent, prepare, and respond to the coronavirus. This will include 1) Tribal citizen relief in the form of education/training, food security, employment income support, housing security, HOPE Program and elder payments; 2) government operations stabilization in the form of employment job security, technology, and prevention, infrastructure, and supplies and 3) future response.

The entire world is in challenging times, not just as a Tribes, but as a country in how we must deal and respond to this pandemic. The tribal leadership and staff have been working diligently to ensure tribal citizens are still able to receive services despite reduced hours and access to tribal buildings. The Tribes have also been able to provide an increase in the monthly payment that is sent to tribal elders every month which is our most vulnerable and at-risk population.

This pandemic is not over. The number of positive cases per day has spiked to more than 1,000 cases per day. Tribal leadership and staff have been trying to prepare the Tribes for this emergent situation. Recently, 7 groundbreaking ceremonies were held for emergency response centers and food pantries capable of providing our tribal citizens in need of food and health screening, testing and staging of medical needs for our people.

The Tribes have purchased emergency vehicles for delivery of food and other supplies as needed. Many other tribal support efforts are ongoing as well. The Tribes are doing the best possible to see tribal operations are open for services that are much needed. Hours of operation will be updated on the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Executive Office Facebook page and tribal website.

Also, the Tribes will be closing every other Friday to provide essential staff a break from the constant increase in applications and demanding workloads. As long as the number of positive cases increases, the Tribes will take all the precautions necessary to keep tribal citizens safe.

To protect the health and safety of everyone and keeping our tribal citizens safe, the Tribes encourage all to take every precaution you can such as social distancing, wearing a mask, using hand sanitizer and frequent hand washing. Thank you and God bless.

For more information, contact the communications office at (405) 422-7928.