



Contact: Karen Francis, *Government Relations Officer*
Office of the Chief Justice

JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION

Office: 928-871-6920

E-mail: karenfrancis@navajo-nsn.gov

<http://www.navajocourts.org>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DATE: Tuesday, June 16, 2020

**NAVAJO NATION AWARDED \$15.7 MILLION IN LAWSUIT AGAINST
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR**

The Navajo Nation was awarded \$15.7 million for the Department of Interior's breach of contract to the Nation's Judicial Branch. The order from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia was issued on Friday, June 12, 2020.

The order stems from a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in favor of the Navajo Nation on April 4, 2017. The Navajo Nation's Judicial Branch submitted its proposed annual funding agreement seeking \$17,055,517 to operate the Navajo Nation courts for Calendar Year 2014 to the Bureau of Indian Affairs on October 4, 2013. The BIA argued a federal government shutdown was sufficient reason to delay the BIA's response to the Navajo Nation's proposal. However, the Court determined that the BIA's partial declination failed to meet the statutory timelines authorized by Congress.

In the order granting summary judgment to the Navajo Nation, the U.S. District Court found that damages in the amount of \$15,762,985 is facially reasonable and that the scope of work submitted by the Judicial Branch as part of the annual funding agreement adequately outlines the justification for the amount that was requested. The order also recognizes that the proposed annual funding agreement submitted by the Navajo Nation on October 4, 2013 is deemed approved as of January 3, 2014.

The Department of Interior has 60 days to appeal this decision. The Judicial Branch will continue to seek contractually obligated funding in the self-determination contracts with the federal government.

###