

Governor Phil Murphy



Press Release

TRANSCRIPT: October 13th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)



(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

10/13/2021



(<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)



(<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Governor Murphy Holds COVID-19 Briefing



(<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)



Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Good afternoon, and thanks everybody for joining us both online and a little bit later than usual today. Appreciate your patience. I am joined on screen by the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli, another familiar face, the State’s Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Great to have you both. A guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. We also today very importantly have Acting Commissioner of the Department of Human Services Sarah Adelman. I see Chief Counsel Parimal Garg and a cast of thousands.

Sarah is with us to give greater detail to the recruitment and retention bonuses that will be available to childcare workers as part of our 100-million-dollar investment in making childcare more accessible and more affordable for working families. She’s also going to share additional detail about how we will invest the nearly \$700 million in American Rescue Plan childcare funding that New Jersey has received. These supports will continue to assist both families and providers. We know that childcare is one of the key challenges facing families, especially single moms, as they rejoin our workforce, so through these investments, we’re committing New Jersey to providing the supports necessary to ensure that this challenge does not become an obstacle. High-quality childcare is good for both our kids and their parents,



so Sarah, thank you for joining us. I look forward to handing things over to you in a couple of minutes. I had the great honor of being with the Vice President of the United States of America, Kamala Harris, in Montclair in Essex County last Friday focusing intently on this very topic, childcare.

Before we get to today's numbers, a couple of things up front, both with a heavy heart. First, over the weekend, our nation lost a tremendous leader with the passing of retired four-star US Army General Ray Odierno due to cancer at the young age of 67. The big O, as he was called, was a New Jersey native. He was raised in Rockaway in Morris County and a graduate of Morris Hills High. He left New Jersey to attend West Point and went on to have an extraordinary military career, serving as a trusted aid to multiple US Presidents and administrations and rising to be the army chief of staff under President Barack Obama. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell called him "one of our most effective combat officers in the years after 9/11". The General leaves his wife of 45 years Linda and their children, including his son who was wounded in combat in Iraq, and their families. We thank General Odierno for his service to our nation, and we wear his native son status from New Jersey as a badge of honor.

Today we also note another connection between New Jersey and this year's Nobel Prize Awards. We already have had two Nobel Laureates this year in New Jersey in the fields of chemistry and physics, both from Princeton, and while the Nobel in economics isn't (https://www.facebook.com/govmurphy) that won Berkeley's David Card on the left the Nobel has a direct connection to our state. David is a 1983 graduate of Princeton University and later obviously worked here as a member of the faculty (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) teamed up with the late economist, the guy on the right, Alan Krueger, Princeton professor, former chair of the Economic Council of Advisors under President Obama, and a personal friend of mine, I might note. He gave Tim Castano and I a lot of his help when we were first establishing a think tank many years ago. (https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

They worked together when David and Alan were both professors at Princeton in the early 1990s. David helped with Alan disprove the myth that raising the minimum wage would lead to job loss, and the evidence they needed was not far away. Professors Card and Krueger analyzed fast food industry job data stemming from New Jersey's own 1992 minimum wage increase, and they compared it to the control variable, in this case Pennsylvania, which did not at the time raise their minimum wage. They literally helped change the way economists and policy makers understand and look at issues of wages, so congratulations to Dr. Card, and we're thrilled New Jersey contributed to yet another Nobel Prize. I would ask you to please keep Alan's family in your prayers.

Now let's get to today's numbers. First since we last got together a week ago, we crossed the threshold of 75% of all eligible individuals ages 12 and older who live, work, or study in New Jersey having completed a vaccination course. We are now one of only seven states to top 75%. I believe it is still the case that the six in front of us are all meaningful smaller in terms of population than New Jersey. While we're on vaccinations, we'll take a very brief look at the latest data from the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service on breakthrough cases. Overall, and even through the Delta surge, the evidence continues to show that the vaccines are overwhelmingly powerful in not only fighting illness but in keeping those who are fully vaccinated and do contract the coronavirus from developing a case of COVID that would lead to a hospital stay or, please God no, a death. That is the point of the vaccine: to prevent against severe COVID and death. In other words, to turn COVID into a more easily beatable illness. That's exactly what the vaccines are doing for more than 75% of eligible New Jerseyans.

Let's update this. Here are the preliminary results just for the week running September 19th through September 26th, which again, put the numbers we put out almost every day almost squarely, sadly the cases of infections, hospitalizations in particular, and sadly deaths, almost entirely among the unvaccinated. It is important to note, too, that the preliminary data suggest that there were no deaths among the fully vaccinated individuals. For the entirety of this week, we reported nearly as you can see 140 deaths from COVID-related complications. Now, looking to the most recently reported positive cases, we're seeing a moderation of new cases. This does not mean that we're not going to have one-day spikes, and this is why the rate of transmission is based off a seven-day curve, not just a one-day curve, but we're seeing more and better trends.

In our schools, we've updated our dashboard for the most recent data. Over the past week, we've been made aware of 27 new outbreaks impacting 17 staff and 125 students. This brings the statewide total number of outbreaks directly related to in-school activity since mid-August to 96 across 84 districts impacting a total of 444 students and 77 staff members. As a reminder, the dashboard tracks COVID outbreaks that lead to three or more infections which are determined to have stemmed from in-school activities. We are well aware that there are additional students and educators and staff who may have been exposed and infected in social gatherings and other means of community spread outside of school. These cases are not tracked in our dashboard, and the layered approach to safety that we've undertaken across all of our schools is designed to keep these instances of community spread from becoming in-school outbreaks.

Now turning to our hospitals, the statewide hospital census from the past few days has remained below 1000, which is a positive sign. It was 895 yesterday. That's down 139 from a week ago. The number of patients in the ICUs has bounced around over the past week, but remains largely where it has been for a while, though today's total of 219 is a decrease of 13 from yesterday, and the number of ventilators in use has dropped slightly as well, 117 as opposed to 130 a week ago. The downside of this reduction is sadly a recognition that some of these patients are no longer with us, and here are the numbers of the newly confirmed related deaths for today as well as the updated number of probable deaths. Let's now take a few moments as we always do to remember several more of these blessed souls who we have lost.

We're going to start with this woman, Ruth Pardue, who had called Wall Township home for a remarkable 54 years. She was 94 when we lost her. Ruth and her late husband Jack by the way they were married in 1952. They moved to Wall in 1966. Jack passed in 2004, but Ruth remained in the township she loved. Ruth had multiple jobs throughout her life, but it was her last one, serving the people of Monmouth County – that's my county – that was most remarkable. When she retired, the county named her last day in as "Ruth Pardue Appreciation Day" in her honor. In retirement and before Jack's death, the two of them traveled extensively, but she was most at home by ocean and family. Her children, Anita, Bill, and Tom, and their families including her three grandchildren and two great grandchildren, they all survive her, and I had the great honor of speaking last week to all three of her kids: Anita, Bill, and Tom. May God bless Ruth and her memory and the family she leaves behind.

We also remember today these two, Kenneth and Bonnie Lake, married for 44 years. They lived in Washington Township in Gloucester County. In his professional life, Kenneth was a truck driver in the Gloucester County region. Bonnie was a childcare worker. On successive days, they each passed from COVID. Kenneth was 75 years old, Bonnie was 68. They're survived by their daughters Amy and Jennifer, their son Timothy, with whom I had the great honor of speaking last week, three beloved grandchildren, Billy, Seth, and Regina. They also leave numerous nieces, nephews, other family members, and lots of good friends.

By the way, COVID ravaged the Lake family. Not only did the mom and dad pass, but all three of the kids had it. Tim I believe was in the hospital at the time of their passing. This thing's brutal. The reality of COVID is especially hard for the families who've lost multiple members to this virus and as I've said in addition to that had multiple illnesses from the virus. Worse still is when those people are parents and grandparents and lost in such succession. May God bless Ken and Bonnie and look over their family. We're closing in on a total of 25,000 confirmed COVID-19 deaths. That is a milestone none of us could have ever imagined, but it is a milestone we have the power to delay by ensuring everyone gets vaccinated and if we all continue to take the precautions we need to protect ourselves and our families and our communities.

Next up, I want to give a big shoutout to Jersey City's White Eagle Hall and their live music entertainment director, that guy right there, Ben LoPiccolo and his partners. They're among the first awardees from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's new Community Stage Relief Grant Program. We know the pandemic has been especially hard on our cultural venues, and few have been harder hit than our stages, but through this grant, Ben and his partners will be able to keep their employees paid and supported to keep bringing both national and local talent into the hall and to keep providing Jersey City with excellent live entertainment. I caught up with Ben last week to thank him for being among the very first of our

cultural venues to seek this vital relief. We all wish him and his team the very best as they put it to use. It's not the first time Ben and I have met. I met him at a prior visit to White Eagle Hall. It's a really special place. Check them out, whiteeaglehalljc.com. That's whiteeaglehalljc – as in Jersey City -.com.

Finally, I want to give a huge thank you to the more than 13,500 poll workers who have signed up over just the past week to work our elections. Last Tuesday when I issued an executive order increasing the pay for our poll workers for both election day and the early voting period, we estimated that we were about 10,000 poll workers short of what we needed. We have now filled that anticipated need and then some. To those of you who have stepped forward to be a part of our democratic process in ensuring that everyone registered and qualified to vote is able to do so, I say thank you, and if you remain interested – nothing wrong with that either – in working as a poll worker and playing a vital role in our election process, please visit that website, pollworker.nj.gov, pollworker.nj.gov for more information. That's all from me. With that being said, please allow me to introduce the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, a terrific leader, Sarah Adelman. Sarah?



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Department of Human Services Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman: Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. As we continue to manage and build back from the challenges of the pandemic, childcare remains a top priority to strengthening our economy and our workforce. As you shared at the top, Governor, we know that affordable, reliable, and quality childcare is critical to our economic recovery, especially for working mothers who have been disproportionately affected by the impact of the pandemic. Today, I am excited to announce our plans to invest more than \$700 million in new funding for the childcare sector to support parents who need additional assistance to pay for childcare, to provide search and add/rehire bonuses to childcare workers, and to distribute additional grants to support childcare providers.



(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)



(<https://www.youtube.com/hfgovernorsoffice>)



(<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)



(<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

We have been focused on using these funds strategically to continue increasing access to childcare for New Jersey's working parents, to improving the quality of childcare system, and to supporting childcare providers and their workforce. This announcement reflects input from families in our state's childcare assistance program and childcare providers and stakeholders we've spoken to through listening sessions and parent roundtables held in recent weeks. Prior to the pandemic, Human Services invested an additional \$100 million to make childcare more affordable and accessible through substantial increases in reimbursement rates and worker wages and by reducing copayments in the state's childcare assistance program. During the pandemic, we've invested an additional \$400 million in coronavirus relief funding to stabilize providers facing closure and fluctuating attendance and to help parents with the unexpected costs of childcare during remote learning hours.

The 700-million-dollar new initiative we're announcing today, which relies primarily on direct funding to our department through the American Rescue Plan funding focuses on three key areas: one, supporting children and families by reducing childcare costs and putting dollars back into the pockets of New Jersey families, two, supporting childcare workers through higher wages and more training, and three, supporting childcare providers with grants for their ongoing operations and incentives to invest in quality and expand after hours care. First, we will continue to reduce the direct cost of childcare for families participating in our assistance program including by waiving their copayments and minimizing their out-of-pocket costs if they were paying the difference between our rate and what the provider charges, and we will do this through the end of 2023.

We will also implement financial incentives to increase the number of childcare providers offering non-traditional hours like night and weekend care, and second, we'll help recruit new childcare employees and retain current childcare staff by providing 1,000-dollar bonus payments in December and again next summer. These bonuses will help providers recruit new workers and retain existing staff so they can serve more children. These bonuses will be partially funded from the Childcare Revitalization Fund signed into law by Governor Murphy, which provides \$30 million to Human Services for childcare workforce assistance. Third, childcare providers will be eligible for two new rounds of pandemic stabilization grants to help stabilize and sustain their operations. For licensed childcare centers, grant availability will range from 20 to \$80,000 in the first round, and for in-home family childcare providers, 2,000-dollar grants will be available. Providers can use these dollars to support their operating expenses such as wages and benefits,

rent and utilities, and facilities improvements and maintenance. We plan to have applications open for these grants in the coming months, and we'll conduct webinars for childcare providers to help understand the grant application and requirements to help them be prepared when it opens.

Grants will be made available for summer youth camp providers again this coming summer in '22 and again in 2023. We know that quality childcare is essential to child development and to economic recovery. With the announcement of this new funding, the Governor and our department will have invested more than \$1 billion in childcare over the course of our administration after a decade of seeing no increases at all. If you're a parent watching and you're wondering if you may be eligible for some of the assistance programs I've talked about, please visit our website childcare.nj.gov where you can input some basic information about your family and income to find out if you may be eligible for assistance affording childcare, and if you've been struggling to find a childcare provider, again, you can visit childcare.nj.gov for more information about childcare providers near you. Thank you very much, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Sarah, great work. Folks, if you're hearing everything Sarah went through, not a new theme, but more firepower directed at a multiprong approach here. Helping families – first of all, accepting the knowledge that childcare is a gamechanger, not just in people's lives but in our economic recovery, especially for mom, and especially even more so for families who can't afford it. It's money to the childcare centers to make sure that they are up and running, including early on you'll remember an enormous amount of resources put to work on the PPE and the VPE, which is still relevant, particularly on masking, and money to get workers to come back in or to be attracted to the industry to begin with.

It has to be – Sarah, fair to say it has to be that multiprong approach. If all you do is help the providers, they may not have enough families who can afford them or workers who can work there. If all you do is help the families, you may not have enough providers to deal with the supply of kids and families who are seeking that childcare, etcetera. Hats off to you, again, for being as robust on this front as any American state. The Vice President came here on Friday not by accident. She came here because of what we're doing with childcare. Deeply appreciate your leadership, Sarah. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, even virtually, the Commissioner of the of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of the Department of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Currently in New Jersey, overall, 84% of our eligible residents have received at least one vaccine dose. The department continues to promote COVID-19 vaccination among those 12 years and older in the state. Only 57.1% of children ages 12 to 15 have received at least one dose. We need to improve that. Additionally, the Department is focusing on increasing booster doses and third doses provided to eligible populations. More than 216,000 individuals who live, work, and study in the state have received a Pfizer booster dose or third dose, but we know more than 1 million are eligible right now. Additionally, 55,944 individuals have received a Moderna third dose.

If it has been at least six months since you received your second dose of the Pfizer vaccine and you are age 18 and over and work or live in a high-risk setting like education, healthcare, transit, restaurant or grocery workers, you're eligible to receive a booster. If you are age 18 to 64 with certain health conditions like cancer, chronic kidney or lung disease, diabetes, heart conditions, obesity and more, you are eligible for a Pfizer booster dose. If you are 65 and older or a long-term care resident, you too are eligible for a Pfizer booster. To date, 61% of those who have received a Pfizer booster are over the age of 65. I would urge those who are eligible to get a booster shot as soon as possible so you have that extra protection as the holidays approach. More and more people will be eligible for boosters in the coming weeks.

The advisory panel to the food and drug administration is expected to vote later this week on whether to recommend emergency authorization of booster shots of both Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. Moderna submitted data to the FDA suggesting that an additional half dose of Moderna vaccine at least six months after the second dose increased antibody levels. It is expected that next week the CDC will review the data and offer guidance on who is eligible for these boosters. Once we have further federal guidance, we will share that with all of you.

The Department is also reminding residents to receive a yearly flu vaccine. Everyone six months of age and older should receive a flu shot. Vaccination coverage for the 2020/2021 flu season were mostly similar to the rates of previous flu seasons. Approximately half, or 55.2% of New Jerseyans six months and older were vaccinated during the 2020/2021 season. The CDC recommends flu vaccination preferably by the end of October since flu activity could surge this season due to increased travel and the return of in-person activities. The flu can cause serious illness and death. Last year there were two child fatalities related to flu and 26 severe flu cases among children. We already had one child hospitalized with severe flu illness this year, so please get yourself and your loved ones vaccinated against the flu. The flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine can be administered at the same time.

At these briefings, we frequently review the physical health impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. However, we know that the mental health impacts have been severe. A Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that during the pandemic about four in ten adults in the United States have reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, and this was up from one to ten before the pandemic. Our healthcare providers have faced the worst of this pandemic, and the trauma of trying to save lives of COVID-19 patients is still with them. To help provide support to nurses, Rutgers University Behavioral Healthcare and the New Jersey Nursing Initiative have created a new peer support resource for nurses. Nurse2Nurse provides one to one peer support, virtual support groups and wellness webinars via its website, www.nurse2nursenj.com (<http://www.nurse2nursenj.com>). Nurse2Nurse now also has a toll-free number, 844-687-7301, staffed by active and retired nurses Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. This work is supported with funding from the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund led by First Lady Tammy Murphy and the New Jersey Nursing Initiative.

As a nurse, I know they are doing extremely difficult work. Nurses are by the bedside comforting patients who are struggling through this illness, and sadly, while they are saying goodbyes to their families on Facebook – on FaceTime, excuse me, trying to comfort them. In a December 2020 survey of more than 12,000 nurses across the country, the American Nurses Foundation found that 72% of nurses report being exhausted amid the pandemic. 64% feel overwhelmed, and 57% report feelings of anxiety or irritability. This will be a vital resource. Again, the number is 844-687-7301. The phone line is staffed by active and retired nurses who have been in their shoes and can provide support.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 829 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and patients under investigation. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, and at the state veterans' homes, no new cases among residents of the homes, and at the state psychiatric hospitals, no new cases among patients at those hospitals. The daily percent positivity as of October 9th in the state is 5.72%. The northern part of the state is 4.25%, central 6.86%, and the southern part of the state 7.77%. That concludes my daily report. Please continue to stay safe, get vaccinated to protect ourselves, our family, our friends, and our children. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, two things to underscore before we turn to Pat and take some questions. Number one, you mentioned this in the Moderna, the likely result on the Moderna booster, but this will present, and we're preparing for this, but just folks have to remember, for the Pfizer crowd, for the Pfizer boosters who are eligible, it's straightforward. It's the same dose. It's an easy distribution challenge. For Moderna, as Judy had said, it is going to be a half a dose, which means we could use – the White House yesterday said we could use what we've got in the field, but it's just a little wrinkle that we've got to be careful of. Then for the kids, presumably, it's a different dose entirely on the Pfizer dose.

We're going to have – before too long, my guess is over the next few weeks – Judy, is that fair to say – we're going to have multiple different types of doses depending on what your age is or what your first and second doses were. I don't think we've got visibility on the Johnson & Johnson booster other than by absence of discussion by the White House yesterday. My assumption is that it's going to be, like Pfizer, a regular – similar to the first dose, but take any color you've got there.

The second point I wanted to make, I haven't said this in a while, that last point in the mental health stress with nurses and other healthcare workers, Judy is the first nurse ever to serve as our Health Commissioner. She has walked in these shoes. Anything on the doses, Judy, you want to underscore?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: No, I think you hit all the salient points. We'll be prepared through all of our existing outlets and several megasites to meet the demand. We just ask for patience because we have to make sure the dosages are correct, that it'll be not as drawing up lots of syringes at one time. Everyone will be checked and individualized and we'll make sure that the vaccination will be as safe as can be.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for everything. Pat, I know there was a pretty emotional memorial event with the Attorney General this morning for members of law enforcement who passed due to COVID. We'd love to get your first-hand read on that and any other matters you've got. Good to see you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Yeah, I'll just go for a few words on that. As you know, we've lost 28 men and women in New Jersey law enforcement family to COVID and during the pandemic. Those line of duty deaths, we usually put a lot into those, and given the nature of this pandemic, we couldn't. The Attorney General hosted that this morning and not only did we have chiefs and county prosecutors, but most importantly, we had the surviving family members there to make sure that – let them know that we're not going to forget and that their service and sacrifice of the citizens of New Jersey was certainly something that we will always honor. It was a special tribute to all of those 28 members. Thank you, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, that was at the AG's justice building?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: That was at the Hughes Justice Complex this morning. It was very special. He unveiled a plaque honoring those 28 members so far. Hopefully, we don't have to put any more names on it, but it definitely is a special morning.

Governor Phil Murphy: There's been a lot of discussion. I think this is on the list of unfinished business that we want to get to, but again, we're still in the fight. God bless the members of law enforcement and more broadly a fitting memorial to those who have been lost in this awful tragic pandemic. It's something that is in the cards to be dealt with once we feel like we're through this thing. Thank you, Pat. Thanks, everybody. Michelle, we'll take a few questions and turn it over to you.

Q&A Session

Michelle: All right, great. We will start with Brent Johnson.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Brent. Brent, I think you're muted.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Hello, Governor. Sorry about that.

Governor Phil Murphy: No worries.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Last night, you seemed flustered by the crowd at the debate. I was wondering if you think it's time for debates to just be two candidates inside of a TV studio. Two, Republicans today put out another release saying that there are pictures showing you at that Garden State Equality event not wearing a mask, not just on stage but also back stage. Did you want to clear up any more about the mask wearing at that event and your reaction to that?

Governor Phil Murphy: My reaction to that is they're desperate. That's my reaction. On the first one, I wasn't flustered at all. I thought it was striking. There was a lot of emotion in that hall. I said last night, you may have heard me, a debate broke out at a hockey game. It was a highly charged environment. No, I wasn't flustered at all, but I'll tell you what was a bummer is there were probably two or three questions left on the table that didn't get asked because of the amount of time that people were protesting and yelling stuff. That, to me, is a disservice to the voters. I'm not sure I'm hell yes or hell no about whether or not you go into a studio, but there's no question in that hour – I'm just guessing at this. I'll bet you it's at least two

or three questions that didn't get asked, but it wasn't a question of flustered. I'm a sports fan. I have no problem being in that arena, but we wanted to make sure that everybody got as much out of it as possible. I think we left a couple of questions on the table.

This stuff about masking, I mean, it's ridiculous. This is our 227th briefing. Most of them – I wish we were live because you see us all walk in with our masks. We take our masks off to speak. When we're done, we put our masks back on. What we've said is we don't think you need to wear a mask outside, but if you're inside and you're uncertain of the vaccination status of the folks inside and you're packed in, especially, you should be wearing a mask.

Two things – sorry, third thing, that event, I'm told, was requirement vaccinated or proof of a negative test. Come on, here. This was desperation. I was on stage speaking, not really near anybody. I took a picture with one of my closest friends, David Mixner, who's as vaccinated as any American, and so am I. I mean, come on, man. Let's focus on the stuff that matters and not the political stuff. Thanks, Brent. Next up, Michelle.

Michelle: Next, we'll go to Mike Catalini.



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Governor Phil Murphy: Hello, Mike. I don't see you.  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Good afternoon, Governor.  (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...>) thanks. The Attorney General's office today announced that a prison guard at Edna Mahan was charged with sexual assault and official misconduct. This happened after the federal monitor was agreed to on August 11th.  (<https://www.instagram.com/governormurphy/>) resigned, after the settlements of \$21 million between the state and inmates at Edna Mahan. How could this have happened again and what are you doing about it?  (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it?

Mike Catalini, Associated Press: Yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good to hear you. I can't see you, but good to hear you. That's disgusting. This can has been kicked down the road for two or three decades. The disgusting incident in January wasn't the first. This is not, tragically, the first. It's been building for literally decades. It's been kicked down the can. We're not going to kick it down the can anymore. We're closing this thing. We're in active discussions with the acting corrections commissioner on exactly how quickly we could get there and what that configuration looks like. There's an overwhelming amount of evidence that having more than one facility to be able to move people around is extremely important. We haven't had that latitude.

I'll leave the specifics of the investigation aside because that's the purview of the Attorney General, but enough already. This is literally disgusting, yet again. We're not going to – we're going to turn the page and this place is going to get closed. We're going to get facilities that make sense in the 21st century. We're going to do things the right way and put this awful history in the rear-view mirror sooner than later. Thank you, Mike. Michelle?

Michelle: Are you ready?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah.

Michelle: All right. Our next question will come from Stacie Sherman.

Governor Phil Murphy: Stacie, how are you? Stacie, you're muted, I believe. Are we unmuteing, Michelle, or is that up to Stacie?

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: No, it's me. I'm sorry. How are you, Governor?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm good, Stacie.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: I wanted to go back to the information you gave about the schools. There were 27 new outbreaks in that October 5th to 11th. That seems like an acceleration. Is that an acceleration? Is it concerning? Also, do you happen to know the percentage of school age eligible kids that have been vaccinated and the percentage of teachers that have been vaccinated?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to defer to Judy and Tina on this, but in terms of whether or not that's accelerating, I'd say the cumulative total is still well within our expectations. I'll let Judy or Tina talk about whether or not that particular week is above the norm. We know the school age kids who are eligible. Judy has that and speaks to that. It's not at the level it needs to be. We know that teachers are at a very high number where – I can't give you a specific number, but we will soon be able to do that. Again, unlike New York City, which is one district, we deal with over 600 districts. Judy's directive of a couple of weeks ago will allow us to get that information more crisply for teachers. We know they start at a very high level. Judy, anything you want to add about either the acceleration or the level of vaccination?

Department of Health Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, let me talk about the level of vaccination. I'm pleased to report that 16- and 17-year-olds in New Jersey, 70.1% have received at least one dose. Our initial goal was to get everyone to 70%. Going on from there, 18-plus were way over 70%, but I am pleased to report that 16- and 17-year-olds are 70.1%. We hope to get that up to 80, 85%. It's the 12- to 15-year-olds that are 57.1%. We're working diligently with these schools and local officials in every municipality to identify those individuals and try to encourage them and their parents to line up and get a shot in the arm. I think overall I'm pleased with where we're going with kids. I wish, again, the younger kids were – that we had higher level of vaccination.

As far as the outbreaks, I'll defer to Tina, Dr. Tan, on her thoughts. She's been monitoring outbreaks in schools of all types for many years. She and her team keep a really close eye on this.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Yeah, thank you for that question. Looking at the data from the last several weeks where we've been looking at the in-school transmission outbreaks, the number of outbreaks has been pretty steady over the last four weeks. At the beginning of the school year, obviously, there were very few outbreaks, less than ten. Then in the last three weeks, including the reporting week, we've been seeing roughly around in the range of 15 to 20-ish outbreaks. I wouldn't say that this is an acceleration. It just reflects what we would normally see. We do expect to see outbreaks at this time of the year. In addition to COVID outbreaks, we are seeing outbreaks of Coxsackie virus, for example, in school and daycare setting. That's what happens when you go back to school, but the important thing is keeping the kids in school, keeping the schools open, and keeping them safe in those settings.

Governor Phil Murphy: Tina, back to school, but also given weather, although it's pretty warm today and tomorrow, the fact of the matter is that we're back to school and largely back indoors, which I assume is also a factor here. Thank you for that. Thank you, Stacie. Michelle?

Michelle: Next is Joey Fox.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi, Joey.

Joey Fox, New Jersey Globe: Hello, Governor. Can you hear me okay?

Governor Phil Murphy: I can hear you. I can hear you better today than I could last night.

Joey Fox, New Jersey Globe: Yeah, sorry about that. Masks will always wreak havoc. Three questions quickly, one, so there's talk that when the deadline for all state employees to return full-time every day hits on October 18th, there will be a big wave of employees putting in their retirement papers. From what you know, could that be true? Has your administration taken any steps to deal with the possibility?

Two hundred twenty-five thousand vote by mail ballots have already been returned out of something like eight hundred or nine hundred thousand sent out. Are you happy with those numbers? Do you see vote by mail as being a big long-term part of New Jersey elections, even after COVID?

Then finally, with holiday shopping season coming up relatively soon, have you heard any concerns about potential breakdowns in the supply chain? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: All good questions. I have not heard that about retirement papers. Parimal is on. Parimal, have you heard anything along those lines?

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: We've been working closely with our departments to make sure that they can successfully return to the office. No news to break there, but [inaudible 43:50].

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, Joey, it's possible, but that is not something that's hit my radar screen. I'm not sure I've got a specific reaction to 225,000 returned, but I do have a specific answer to whether or not vote by mail will continue to be a big part of our voting process, and the answer is yes. We're a state now that has proven we can do it successfully. Last year, we had among the highest turnout of any American state. It was obviously overwhelmingly a vote by mail year given the pandemic. This year, it's one level back to normal. You have to request your ballot, but on another level, we've got a new wrinkle, which starts a week from Saturday, early in-person voting. I see vote by mail being very much a part of our suite of how you can vote. The more opportunities to vote, the better.

I think – listen, inevitably, there are going to be challenges. The port – this is a great testament to the Port Authority of New York/New Jersey, to the International Longshoremen's Association, to the companies that are at the port that New Jersey has not had the pile-up of ships offshore anchored that you've seen places like Savannah or the West Coast, which are in chaos, so that's good news. The other piece – the other thing we've got going for us, we're the largest market – consumption market in the world, so they come into our ports and some of the stuff goes into warehouses that in turn go on trucks or on trains, but a lot of it gets distributed right into the metro New York/New Jersey area. I think inevitably, Joey, given the global reality, nothing specific to do with New Jersey – the global reality, I would bet you there's going to be challenges, and we'll obviously do everything we can. We've become not only do we have the largest port in the East Coast, which is having a record year, by the way, but we've also become much – very much so relatedly, the warehouse state. If any state's going to be able to keep stuff moving, it's going to be us, but I don't think we're immune to the global supply challenges, including everything from lumber to chips to toys, so stay tuned. Thanks for asking.

Michelle, let's do a few more.

Michelle: Great, next we'll go to Daniel Munoz.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hello, Daniel.

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Hi, can you hear me?

Governor Phil Murphy: I can hear you. How are you?

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Good, thanks. Hope you're doing well. If you could go back to the Rowan event in 2019 with your – if taxes are your comment, would you have said that differently and if so, what would you have said instead? Regarding last night's debate, how exactly would you make the state more affordable for residents and businesses? What taxes would you cut and what spending would you take out of the budget? How can you actually lower property taxes? Lastly, if and once the Moderna and J&J boosters are approved, what would need to happen for the state to begin administering the J&J Moderna boosters, and how many would be eligible each for Moderna and J&J? What megasites would have to be open, and which ones are online now? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. I will – the statement I made in – I don't even know that it was at Rowan in 2019. It was completely taken out of context. I don't want to get too political. This is a COVID update and that's its intention. A, completely taken out of context. It was said about businesses, not about families, and it was said in the following context: you come to New Jersey if you're a company, I think overwhelmingly for talent and location, and we invest in each of those at a level that no other state in America invests. We do everything we can to make the state more affordable, but neither of those come free. When you've got the number one education system in America, a top handful healthful state in America, the best state in America to raise a family, a location that's second to none with the density that we have, the talent we have, that's what we sell. When we sell to a business, when we sell to a family, it's the best state in America to raise a kid. We're the best state in America to come and do business. That's why Fixer has come here. That's why Hacks Accelerators are coming here. That's why we've got the south Jersey windport and we've got first mover advantage. That's why they're building film studios in New Jersey, because they see that location and talent. Families come here because they see schools, healthcare, quality of life, location, etc. Completely taken out of context, and I stand by what I've just said in the past two minutes.

More affordable, again, I don't want to get down a rabbit hole in terms of stuff that's more political or not. If you're a – we inherited an affordability crisis. If you are a working family, you are today paying less already – forget what I want to do. You're paying less in income taxes; you're paying less for childcare; you're paying less for college; you're paying less for healthcare. You're not paying a dime more to ride on New Jersey Transit trains. All of those, that's relief that's real, that's – forget about perspective. That's happened. We've raised the minimum wage. We've got earned sick leave, equal pay for equal work, earned income tax credit at record levels. There's all sorts of relief that's already happening.

The biggest tax hike on middle class New Jersey families, homeowners in this case, in the history of our state was brought by the Trump Administration, and that was the capping of the state and local tax deduction. That wasn't me. I fought every inch against that, and I will fight until we get it lifted. That is the big potential relief that we have overwhelmingly benefiting middle class homeowners and particularly seniors who are on a fixed income.

Judy, I don't know that we know yet in terms of the distribution model for Moderna booster. I think you're still war-gaming that but any comments you've got on that.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Sure. We will have a wide-scale distribution model to handle any demand that we have. The Gloucester site is already open. We expect to have two or three more throughout the state. The FQHCs, the hospitals, the independent and retail pharmacies are all open for business and vaccines. I want to make it very clear that doctors' offices, primary care physicians, pediatricians' offices are all signing up. Every week, we get a report on the number of offices that are ready and willing and able to deliver all three types of vaccines. There are hundreds of physician offices, primary care, and pediatrician offices that will be partnered with facilities that can maintain the stabilization of the vaccine through ultra-cold storage, etc., and they will be available to deliver vaccines to places where people feel very comfortable going for vaccines throughout the years. It will be a very wide range of outlets.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. Daniel, thanks for the questions. Michelle, let's do one or two more if we could.

Michelle: Okay, we'll go to Katherine Landergan.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi, Catherine.

Katherine Landergan, Politico: Hi. Can you guys hear me?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep.

Katherine Landergan, Politico: Thanks. Your campaign – so during this, your campaign sent out a release saying that former President Obama will be campaigning for you. Just curious, are there any plans for President Biden to be campaigning for you before the election? On the return – I think it's the Return and Earn program, we haven't seen much evidence yet from other states that the hiring bonuses portion of this really moves the needle in terms of lowering unemployment. Why did you decide to do these bonuses anyways? Then number two, do you have any regrets of rolling out this retraining program when you did, or should it have been done earlier given the state's very high level of unemployment? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Several things, nothing more to add on anybody coming in but obviously getting President Obama to come into New Jersey is a big deal and more details on that or more details on anyone else who might be coming in for us.

Return – your premise is right on Return and Earn. That also partly answers the second part of your question. The cash on the barrel for the employees alone does not appear to have moved the needle with other states that have done it. I had a good discussion about this at the NGA meeting I went to, in and out, in Colorado in August with both Republicans and Democrats. It's a feel-good thing and that's – there's something to be said for that. Alone, it does not appear to move the needle. What we did was we war-gamed, and I don't regret the timing because I wasn't comfortable throwing money on the street that we weren't sure would have a good payback. We've put almost \$800 million into small businesses. Somebody

was texting with a friend of mine earlier saying, "I wish you'd do more for small businesses." I appreciate that. Check out what we've done before you say that. Only California and New York have done more than New Jersey, and they're a lot bigger than we are. We'll continue to put money on the street.

We think there is potential magic between the 500 bucks you pay the employee and the \$10,000 you pay the small business up to four employees in the first six months of that employee's employment to upscale them, to train them. We think there is magic there. We've put just under \$10 million on the street. I mentioned last week, I think 2100 small businesses have – I wouldn't say registered but registered interest, at least, and that number's up since then. If this does work, look to us to be putting a lot more to work. That's the reason why we didn't just do cash on the barrel and why we wanted to wait to make sure we got this right as we thought we could get it.

Again, I'm not sure we've got it right, but I feel good about the early returns. We shall see. Getting folks upskilled and paying them to do it and then paying the small business to do it at the same time, that's a win-win-win potentially. That's the rationale. We're going to continue to put a lot of money to work for small businesses as a general matter.  (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Hey, Michelle, let's do one last one. We promised we'd  [break this by 3, so let's do one more](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy) (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

Michelle: Okay, then our last one will be Alex Zdan.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Alex.  (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: Now I'm unmuted. Can you hear me now?  (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Governor Phil Murphy: Good job tech'ing the press conference last night, by the way.  (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: I'm always happy to pull the plug on my competition, Governor. I'd like to ask you about a state law that was passed during the Christie Administration that mandates that 3% of all state contracts go to veteran-owned businesses. Veterans groups have said both your Administration and Governor Christie's Administration never rolled out that program. Why has it not been rolled out, and will you roll it out? I'd also like to ask you about the investigations at the veterans' homes in Menlo Park and Paramus. In October, the fed said they ended investigations into New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan's nursing homes. However, they continued the investigation begun under the Trump Justice Department, continued in the Biden Justice Department into those two veterans' homes. Why? For Commissioner Persichilli, I understand that Veterans' Affairs runs those two homes, but you obviously work with them. Did you ever issue guidance to the veterans' homes instructing them to cohort patients? If so, when? If no, why not? Have you been interviewed by federal investigators? Finally Governor Murphy, General Beale resigned. My News 12 colleague, Walt Cain, found discrepancies with the death toll in both Menlo Park and Paramus veterans' homes. There were clearly failures. Why do you not acknowledge the 47 probably deaths at those homes? Do you take responsibility for those failures, and is this an October surprise in your campaign?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Alex. I'm going to come back to you unless Parimal knows more about the 3% hiring. We love our veterans and we are constantly talking about women, minority and veteran-owned businesses. We've done a lot for them on property tax relief, on relief from their – from income tax on their combat pay. We were the last state in America, tragically, to do that, and we turned that around in our Administration. Parimal, anything you – color on that? Otherwise, I think we probably want to get back to Alex for more detail on that.

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: Yeah, we'll circle back with you, Alex.

Governor Phil Murphy: Alex, if there's a federal investigation going on on something, you can assume up front that we're not going to have any commentary. God bless our veterans, 64/81/12, those are the lost confirmed lives between Menlo Park, 64, Paramus, 81 in Vineland, 12. We had a most recent death in Vineland, first one in months of any of the three homes a week or so ago. No comment on that.

The guidance, again, Judy or I aren't going to talk about who gets interviewed or who doesn't get interviewed. The guidance Judy put out, I don't have it in front of me. I believe it was April 2, 2020, was to all long-term care facilities including our veterans' homes. Judy will correct the record if not. We are – as

tragic and as saddened as we are by the loss of life – and it's an overwhelming tragedy – the tragedy within the tragedy is long-term care and within that, our blessed veterans. We have been dogged under Ed Lifshitz's leadership to be explicit in any death toll numbers. We've never, ever once said that there were not probables associated with those homes, and we will not say that now. We take that very, very seriously, and I don't know that we're the only state but I'll bet you we're one of the few, if only, states that have this as accurate as we have it. Judy, you good with that? Anything you want to add or you all right?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: I'm good.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. Thank you all. I want to thank Judy and Tina, as always. Sarah Adelman, thank you for joining us and all the exciting things you're throwing up against childcare. Pat, thank you for that, in particular, recounting that emotional memorial earlier today. Parimal, I should've said Alex Altman was our director today. I want to thank her. We will be with you, unless you hear otherwise, Monday back in Trenton in the Washington ballroom in our usual spot at 1 o'clock on Monday. In the meantime, folks, thank you for everything you have done. Get vaccinated. If you're eligible for a booster, get your booster. Continue to use common sense. With that, we will get to the end zone. We're not  ever, but we will get there together. Blessings. Take care, everybody.

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](/governor/)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](/governor/admin/about/)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](/governor/admin/lt/)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](/governor/admin/fl/)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](/governor/admin/cabinet/)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency \(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](/governor/admin/bca/)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](/governor/admin/internship.shtml)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

 (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

 (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

 (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

 (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

News & Events

Press Releases (/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)

Photos (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy>)

Public Addresses (</governor/news/addresses>)

Executive Orders (/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

Administrative Orders (/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

Direct Appointments (</governor/news/appointments>)

Advice and Consent Appointments (</governor/news/acappointments>)

Statements on Legislation



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)



(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

Administration Reports (/governor/news/administrative_reports/approved/archive.shtml)



(<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

Transition Reports (/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)



(<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Press Kits (</governor/news/press>)



(<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Social

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/>)

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

TikTok (<https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?>)

Contact Us

Scheduling Requests (</governor/contact/scheduling/>)

Contact Us (</governor/contact/all/>)

Statewide

NJ Home ([//www.nj.gov](http://www.nj.gov))

Services A to Z ([//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html))

Departments/Agencies ([//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/))

FAQs ([//www.nj.gov/faqs/](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/))

Contact Us ([//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html))

[Privacy Notice \(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](https://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

[Legal Statement & Disclaimers \(//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](https://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

[Accessibility Statement \(//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](https://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)



<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>



<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>



<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>



<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>



<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>

<https://nj.gov/opra/>

<https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login>

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

<https://tech.nj.gov/>