

**Governor Phil Murphy**

# TRANSCRIPT: December 11th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

12/11/2020

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everybody and Happy Friday. I'm joined by the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another very familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan, great to have you both. The guy to my left who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. We have Jared Maples, Director of Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Chief Counsel Parimal Garg.

Part of the reason why we're an hour behind and I'm a couple of minutes later, as Judy knows, Judy and I came from, I think, a really productive -- sobering but productive -- discussion in Camden at Cooper University Medical Center with the Cooper team, as well as Ambassador Dr. Deborah Birx, who's become, over the past nine months, a familiar person to many, including the two of us, and Pat as well. She's been a very good advisor to us. We talked about testing, therapeutics vaccine, had a pretty sobering view, I thought, of the country's current state of the pandemic, which is extremely sobering. Good exchange. Cooper's doing an extraordinary job, I have to say, both in its day job in terms of inside its four walls and what it does in Camden County and beyond, but also they are coordinating the South region for Judy. So Kevin O'Dowd, their co-CEO has wears two hats. Not only is he helping run Cooper, but he's helping run the Southern region. I want to say that was really productive. Judy, as always, it was good to be with you.

A few announcements before we get to the overnight numbers, and we'll try to buzz through today just because we started later, as quickly as we can here. First, the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control today announced formal action against 10 bars and restaurants which were found in violation of our public health



Executive Orders, among other citations. The charges brought seek suspensions of liquor licenses for anywhere between 10 all the way up to 115 days, depending on the charges filed. The establishments, and I'm going to go through them by name, and the reason I'm doing this is the overwhelming amount of restaurants and bars and others – gyms, indoor theaters, indoor entertainment – are doing the right thing. And so by inference, I want to give them a shout out but I want to make sure also folks know that there are folks who are not doing the right things and they need to know that.

So we have 10-day suspensions, Wicked Wolf in Hoboken and 30 Strikes Lanes in Stratford; 15-day suspension against Eddie's Bar and Liquors in Bayonne. 20 days against Jalapenos Bar and Grill in Gloucester City and 25 days against New Brunswick George Street Ale House; a 30-day suspension against Riley's, both Riley's Bar and Grill in Kearny and the 814 South Pub and Kitchen in Somerdale; 40 days for Greystone Inn in Little Falls. Black Betty Saloon in Sayreville faces a 70-day suspension and the final establishment, B&B Saloon Atlantic City, 115 day suspension of liquor license.

And by the way, it gives me no pleasure, any of us any pleasure to file these charges. It is the last thing, frankly, we want to do. Which, by the way, the Attorney General's Office has specifically detailed in their announcement and I want to thank the Attorney General Gurbir Grewal and Alcoholic Beverage Control Director James Graziano for their work. Let these charges send a perfectly clear signal to any bar or restaurant owner who thinks that the rules don't apply to them. This will happen to you. Our job is to protect both public health and our economy. It says literally in front of me, "public health creates economic health" as you can see. There are countless restaurant owners, as I said a minute ago, and managers doing the absolute heroic right things each and every day, to help us live up to this mantra. We will not tolerate knucklehead behavior and we will not hesitate to shut you down.

And to all the restaurateurs, again, out there who are doing the right thing, we thank you, we appreciate you and we urge residents to pay you a visit, have a great meal with you, either there or one that you take home. But in either case, support you. You have earned it.

Moving on, switching gears. We are excited by the action taken yesterday, Judy, I think this may be the understatement of the year, by the FDA's Vaccine Advisory Panel in its approval of the Pfizer Biontec emergency use authorization application. We anxiously awaiting the final vote by the FDA's commissioners, which I do not believe has taken place while we were at Cooper, right?

Should the FDA grant its approval, we anticipate the first shipments of this vaccine beginning to arrive in the next few days and we will be ready to immediately begin putting our vaccine plan in place starting with our frontline healthcare workers. When that occurs, we will let you know. But certainly no one can dampen the real sense that we are now in the opening scenes of the end of this pandemic. I'm going to paraphrase Churchill, I think we're at the beginning of the end, as opposed to the end of the beginning. It's not going to be overnight, there won't be a light switch, but we can finally begin to sense the end in real time.

Next up, switching gears, during the first wave of the pandemic in the spring, the Diabetes Foundation and its partners came together to provide free backup supply packs to ensure residents living with diabetes had access to the monitoring equipment that is so vital to their wellbeing. This took on greater importance because we saw early on that residents with diabetes were being particularly impacted by COVID. Now the Diabetes Foundation and their partners are at it again in making glucometers, test strips and other life-saving supplies available free of charge for New Jersey residents with diabetes who need them. However, there is a limited supply or quantity of these supplies, so I urge any resident with a need to apply through that website, diabetesfoundationinc.org. I want to thank the Diabetes Foundation, number one, but also its partners, Ascensia Diabetes Care, Arkray USA, Becton Dickinson and Co., BioReference labs, the George Link Charitable Trust, the Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, and the Russell Barry Foundation for their tremendous efforts. Again, the website is that one in front of you, diabetesfoundationinc.org.

This is also a good place to remind everyone that New Jersey's own healthcare marketplace, getcovered.nj.gov, remains open for all residents who are looking for an affordable health plan to cover them and their families in 2021. Anyone looking for healthcare coverage for the upcoming year should visit getcovered.nj.gov today to review your plan options and learn if you qualify for financial assistance. Importantly, this year, individuals eligible for subsidy assistance and premium tax credits will find the lowest net premiums ever under the Affordable Care Act. For many residents, the cost of healthcare is estimated to

be \$117 a month. That's a savings of nearly \$50 a month from the current year and even \$30 a month cheaper than a plan that was purchased six years ago in 2014. Open enrollment runs – remember we doubled the enrollment period so it runs through January 31st, but there's no reason not to go online today again. Again, go to [getcovered.nj.gov](https://getcovered.nj.gov) to find an affordable health plan that works for you and your family.

Next up, shift another gear. As it was reported yesterday by the Department of Labor, the unemployment figures for this past week showed a week-over-week increase in initial claims of roughly 3,500 for a total of just over 17,000. Over the past nine months, more than 1,840,000 New Jersey workers have filed claims for unemployment assistance. The department has distributed more than \$19.7 billion to New Jersey workers during that time, for an average of nearly \$14,000 per claimant. These are not just record-setting, but record-shattering numbers and the entire team of the Department of Labor has our gratitude for all they're doing to help workers receive their benefits. We know that there are those who, for one reason or another, still have not yet had their cases finalized. To be clear, the majority of these cases, in fact I think almost overwhelmingly, the cases have very specific and complex issues that must be dealt with individually. None of us, I promise you this, will rest until every New Jersey claimant has received every single penny they deserve.

The department is also reporting that legislation I recently signed expanding eligibility for extended unemployment benefits has already resulted in an additional 2,000 workers receiving these critical additional payments. As more workers exhaust their regular unemployment benefits, this number will continue to grow. These are workers who were denied under the old law, but are now eligible. This is just one small example of how we're working hand in glove with the Department of Labor to get every penny into the wallets of New Jerseyans whose jobs have been impacted by COVID-19.

Lastly, on the same topic, the department is planning to provide another round of FEMA lost wages assistance payments to more than 10,000 newly eligible workers next week. Those workers can expect to receive emails with instructions. Happily, those payments should arrive just in time for Christmas.

Now let's turn our attention to the overnight numbers. Today we are reporting an additional 3,821 positive PCR test results. Judy and team are working on the antigen numbers which we will hope, at some point down the road, fold into our daily report. The cumulative total since March 4th, 390,256. The positivity rate for the 49,227 PCR tests that were recorded on Monday, December 7th, was 9.95%.

The statewide rate of transmission for today is 1.14, and we now see the increases that we had predicted, Judy, from the past week impacting the statewide RT. One week ago today that was at, by example, 1.05 and you predicted with the upsurge in the total tests coming in over the past week that would shift up, and it has.

As we discussed on Wednesday, even our moderate impact model show a significant increase in new cases over the coming weeks unless we – and when I say we, all of us folks – fully recommit to doing our part to slow the spread. We cannot just let this virus run rampant and have its way with us. We have to fight to protect every resident, every family, every community, and we have to protect our healthcare system and the tremendous frontline, heroic healthcare workers.

So statewide yesterday, those healthcare workers in our hospitals were treating 3,571 patients, 3,332 of whom are known COVID positive, the balance of 239 are awaiting confirmation results. Yesterday, this is good news, 425 live residents walked out of our hospitals, but those beds were immediately refilled by 467 who walked in. This is apples to oranges, they're not yet confirmed, but 54 folks died in our hospitals over the past 24 hours.

So our hospitals on Sunday, Judy, had 3,346. Today it is 3,571. It is going up, if I'm looking for slivers of silver linings or possible good news, it's going up at a lower rate over the past week. Let's just hope it stays that way and then starts to come down. Our models do not suggest that, by the way. Let's hope that our behavior is already impacting those models. Our intensive care units were treating, by the way, 687 patients; 421 ventilators in use.

More than anything, this is why we need to stem the spread of COVID. more positive cases means more hospitalizations. More hospitalizations means more stress on the healthcare network that we're relying on to stay strong throughout this surge. So please, folks, please, please, please take this seriously. Do your part every day. Just because a vaccine is right on the horizon doesn't mean that we can start to let our guard

down. There is no light switches, as we've mentioned. We can begin to feel better and more optimistic that the end is coming but we have to carry on in a war footing for a few more months. We have to get through this winter together.

I know we're tired, but we cannot give up. Please don't throw your hands up. Instead of throwing them up, Pat, wash them with soap and water for 20 seconds. We can't give up because frankly, we're losing too many lives. Today, with the heaviest of hearts, we're announcing another 55 confirmed deaths. Several of these date before Thanksgiving but Judy, by my count of the 55, 27 of them are from the past three days, including 16 alone on December 8th, which was Tuesday. Over the past nine months, 15,794 confirmed COVID-related losses of precious lives in our state. Another 1,868 deaths remain listed is probable. By the way, on that list, a little bit more color on this. A total of that amount of 1,868, 675 probable deaths from among residents and staff in our long-term care centers and some of these probable cases go all the way back to March. We don't have a specific release, I don't have a specific breakdown of these deaths, but it is safe to assume the vast majority are residents.

There are multiple reasons why a death may be listed as so-called probable. As I said when we first began listing probable deaths, hard to believe this but it was on June 25th. We know that there are those upon whom a COVID-19 test was never performed, especially in the earliest days of the pandemic. Yet the underlying symptoms, it's fair to say, Judy and Tina, and causes of death point to the probability that they did in fact have COVID-19. So let's take a minute, as we do every day, and remember three precious lives lived and lost in our state.

We begin with a man whose face may not be familiar to many but whose voice was a part of daily life for countless radio listening Central New Jerseyans, New Jersey Broadcasting Hall of Fame member, talk radio pioneer and the longtime voice of Central Jersey at WCTC, Jack Ellery. Jack is one of those 16 who passed this Tuesday. He was born Jack Eisner, and in all his career in radio would span – are you ready for this? – 63 years. He got his start in 1950 as a weekend disc jockey in Maine. When he served in the US Army from 1956 to 1958, he broadcast on Armed Forces Radio from his post in one of my former hometowns, Frankfurt in Germany. In 1960, he landed in Piscataway and on the airwaves of WCTC. While he would have other stints in New York or Philadelphia, he always returned to his WCTC home, logging a total there of 44 years.

It was Jack who broke the news to Central Jersey on November 22, 1963, that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. Pioneering the talk radio format, he brought his wit and good nature to the airwaves and to the thousands of conversations he would have with his audience. He always talked with them, and he never talked down to them. I had him in the back of my mind when I was on with Harry Hurley this morning, who I'm on with fairly regularly, and Harry does a great job, one of the great radio guys in our country, never mind our state. I had Jack in the back of my mind, and I meant to mention him on the program.

Jack retired his microphone in 2013. He was among seven inaugural inductees upon the establishment of the New Jersey Broadcaster Association Hall of Fame in 2012, and he was also the recipient of the association's Lifetime Achievement Award. Jack leaves behind his wife Shelby and his daughter Amy, with whom I had the great honor of speaking, and son-in-law Adam and his granddaughters Meryl and Alina. He was predeceased, sadly, by another daughter, Jill, and he's also survived by his brother Robert, and by his nephews and niece.

Service comes in many different ways. Jack served us by leading us in conversation, bringing us closer together by talking with, and importantly listening, to one another. We can use a little bit more of Jack Ellery. This rarely happens. I think this might be the first time this has happened and it was not by design. Jack's funeral is literally right now as we sit here. So thank you, Jack. God bless you and watch over you and your family, and may your memory be a blessing.

Next up, we remember another who served our state for four decades. Look at that, huh? As a member of the New Jersey Department of Transportation family, and as a volunteer firefighter in his hometown of Denville, Roy Shriver, and Roy was just, as I am, 63 years old. Roy started his career at DOT as a maintenance worker at the age of just 17 and retired in 2014 as area supervisor. He also became a volunteer firefighter at the age of 18, serving first in Secaucus, and then Denville. He was active right up until his passing, a total of 45 years of service.

When he wasn't in a DOT garage or the firehouse, Roy loved being in the great outdoors, whether it be hunting in Indiana, fishing in the Florida Keys, or simply being in the wilds of New Jersey with his friends and his hunting dog, Tucker. And when a trip wasn't in the offing, Roy could often be found tending to his lawn, which was a special passion of his. Roy leaves behind his wife Joanne after 41 years of marriage. He also leaves behind his daughter Jennifer and his son Jason and their families. I had the honor of speaking with Jennifer on Wednesday. And by the way, this was not the first time our family had connected with Jennifer. My wife spoke to her because she was New Jersey State Teacher of the Year for 2018-2019.

The families that Jennifer and Jason have include Roy's five grandchildren, Hudson, Avery, Braden Kendall and Taylor, among other family and friends. So on behalf of Diane Scacetti and the DOT family, we thank Roy for his years keeping New Jersey moving, and we thank him for his years keeping Denville's families safe. May God bless and watch over you and your family, Roy.

Finally, today, we remember another New Jerseyan who dedicated his life, with a great smile, to public service, Senior Correctional Police Officer Eric Whitaker. Eric passed away one week ago today at the age of only 48 years old. Eric was born in Bridgeton, graduated from Cumberland Regional High School, advanced his education at Cumberland County College and had been employed by the New Jersey Department of Corrections at Southwood State Prison for the past 19 years. He served with dignity, and he was a proud member of a great labor family, NJPBA Local 105 which Pat, you and I both know well. Eric was a man of tremendous faith, who was described by those who loved him as, and I'm quoting, "an old soul, a witty genius, a good counsel and a great man." That's high praise. He's also being remembered for his love of music and Charlotte Hornets Basketball, owned by none other than MJ himself, Michael Jordan, and for his uncanny abilities when it came to trivia, which earned him the nickname, Mr. Jeopardy.

He leaves behind his mom Ruby Lee, please keep her in your prayers, his son Jason with whom I had the great honor of speaking a couple of days ago, to whom he was a hero, and his bonus son Davon. He's also survived by his sister Doraline and brother Edward, and by his niece Ashley and great nephew Tyreke, as well as by numerous other family and friends and of course, his PBA 105 family and his great South Woods State Prison family. We thank Eric for his years of dedicated service and we know his spirit will continue to watch over those he leaves behind. May God bless him and them.

So three more lives dedicated to the greater good. We honor them today as we honor all we have lost, and may they all be remembered fondly.

Now finally, before we turn things over to you, Judy, let's end on a high note and recognize another of the small businesses working in partnership with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to stay strong and healthy in its own right. And today it's a business that's also working to keep its community strong and healthy, KS Fitness Center of Toms River. The family-owned business has been keeping Toms River's residents healthy for the past 25 years by offering them a comfortable and friendly place to exercise. Obviously, the pandemic has been especially hard on the fitness industry and KS' current owner, and that's her on the left, Haja Yu, worked with the EDA to secure a grant that has allowed them to cover expenses and keep their doors open. Check them out, by the way, at [ksfitnesscenter.com](http://ksfitnesscenter.com). I had the opportunity to check in with Haja on Wednesday. And by the way, also on Wednesday in response to a question that was asked here, I noted that the overwhelming majority of our gym owners, as our restaurants, have been doing the right things day in and day out and not only deserve our support, but support from Washington as well. Please, God, if you're listening from Washington, can we please get a big meaningful stimulus bill passed, signed and sent on its way for small businesses, for the unemployed, to allow us to keep folks employed at the front lines in our desperate hour of need. Haja deserves to be high on that list, and KS Fitness Center.

That's where I'm going to wrap it up for this week. With that, it is my pleasure to introduce the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. Well, as the Governor shared, yesterday the panel that advises the Food and Drug Administration, the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, met to review the Pfizer COVID-19 candidate vaccine data and voted to recommend that the FDA issue an emergency use authorization for the Pfizer vaccine. Following these recommendations, the FDA will decide whether to issue an emergency use authorization, known as an EUA. After the EUA is issued, six hospitals in our state will receive what we call pre-positioned doses.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, ACIP, will meet at an emergency meeting on Sunday and make recommendations to the CDC. The CDC Director will need to approve those or accept, I should say, those recommendations. Once the CDC issues their guidance, that will be published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, also known MMWR. Distribution, the actual distribution of the vaccine to the initial eligible population can begin within 24 hours.

As we have covered previously, this initial population during Phase 1 will be healthcare workers, personnel who are defined as paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings, who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials. Phase 1A will also include long-term care residents. Phase 1A is expected to start this month with some limited doses for hospital-based workers, and continue into early 2021.

The category of those who are eligible to receive vaccinations in Phase 1A is very broad, and it includes any worker who serves in a healthcare setting. New Jersey's diverse healthcare workforce includes licensed individuals like doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, staff that work in these offices, like receptionists, environmental services, mortuary services, laboratory technicians. It can include consultants or contractors who are not directly employed by the facilities. Unpaid workers like students studying the various health professions and volunteers and essential caregivers who are entering our hospitals to support their loved ones. Community health workers, doulas, public health professionals like the Medical Reserve Corps, who are volunteers from clinical fields will also be included. Personnel who work in variable venues like EMS, paramedics, funeral care services and autopsy workers, and other paid and unpaid people who work in healthcare settings, who may have direct or indirect contact with infectious materials.

In New Jersey, there are about 650,000 individuals who fit into these categories. Healthcare is provided in diverse settings, including acute pediatric and behavioral health hospitals, psychiatric facilities, federally qualified health centers, rehabilitation facilities, clinic-based settings like Urgent Care, dialysis centers, family planning sites, long-term care settings like nursing homes, assisted living, group homes and others. Occupational-based healthcare settings like health clinics within workplaces, shelters, jails, colleges, universities, K through 12 schools, community-based healthcare settings like PACE, program of all-inclusive care for the elderly, and adult living community nursing, and home-based settings like hospice homecare and visiting nurse services. Office-based healthcare settings like your physician's office or a dental office; public health settings like the local health department, the links agencies, harm reduction centers and the medicinal marijuana programs; retail independent and institutional pharmacies and other settings and all settings where healthcare is provided. We expect the initial supply in New Jersey to be 76,050 doses with additional doses coming in the following weeks, and then we hope that Moderna vaccine will be approved and come shortly after.

Our Professional Advisory Committee continues to work through prioritization of essential workers, which is considered Phase 1B. They are guarded by several ethical principles. First, to maximize benefits and minimize harm. This aligns with the goal of preserving services essential to COVID-19 response and the overall functioning of society.

Secondly, to promote justice, recognizing that those unable to work from home have the highest exposure risk, and also recognizes the need to increase access to vaccine and reduce barriers for workers with very low vaccine uptake.

And thirdly, to mitigate health inequities. Acknowledging that racial and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately represented in many of our essential industries. About 25% of essential workers live in low income communities, and they have been most harmed by COVID-19. Some of our vaccine planning assumptions include first that there will be limited availability the vaccine for several months, the exact amount we still do not know. And one vaccine type will go to each point of dispensing in order to make the logistics of calling people back for the second shot easier.

Given the complexity of this national rollout of the vaccine, some of these details could change but New Jersey continues to be prepared for receipt of the vaccines, and to work closely with the original six prepositioned hospitals to ensure that workers can be vaccinated as soon as possible. To remind you, our

goal is to vaccinate 70% of the adult population in New Jersey in a six-month period. Our objective is that no vaccine will be left on the shelf.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals report 3,571 hospitalizations with 687 individuals in critical care. Several of the CEOs of the hospitals have advised me that they have seen a sort of softening of the admissions and there are less hospitals on divert than there were a mere week ago.

Since the last press briefing, there's been one new report of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 65 total cases in the state.

At the state veterans homes, there's one new positive among residents at the Menlo Park home, and that individual is asymptomatic. And at our psychiatric hospitals, the numbers remain the same.

The percent positivity, this is back on December 7th in the state was 9.95%. Today, it is 14%. That concludes my daily report. Stay safe and remember for each other and for us all, please take the call. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, as always, thank you. Great discussion around vaccines. On the spot positivity, do you have it by region, by chance?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I do. I want to give you the most up to date.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Of late it's been pretty tight, Central and South.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah. On the 7th, this is interesting, can we do a comparison between the 7th and the 11th?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yep. That would be today, right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah. The 7th, New Jersey overall was 9.95. Today, 14.1. The Northern part of the state 10.37 on the 7th, today 14.79. On the 7th, the Central part of the state 9.02; today 13.2. And on the 7th, 11.31 in the Southern part of the state and today, the Southern part of the state 14.16. We've seen a significant increase in positivity over a very short, over a four-day period.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Not literally to the decimal point but North, Central, South, in each of the days fairly similar in the numbers, which is what we've been seeing folks and that says that it's everywhere. There's no other way around it. Thank you, Judy. Pat, thank you for everything. Compliance, obviously there's a lot of moving parts. A special little story I know you've got, anything else, the weather's good so hopefully that's not on your list, but over to you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. In addition to the 10 ABC enforcement measures that were taken, there were three EO related violations since we last met in Passaic. Anais Lounge was cited for EO violation for no social distancing and no facial coverings. In Secaucus, a subject under arrest for DWI coughed and spit on the officers, claiming to have COVID. In Morristown, police responded to an unruly customer who was refused to be served because he was not wearing a mask, pulled out a box cutter, punched an employee and was ultimately charged with aggravated assault, possession of a weapon for unlawful purpose, and other charges.

And to your point about the special story, if you recall Governor, you came to headquarters with us, Sophia Colavito from South --

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Oh, look at her!

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Here she is. She's fighting a rare cancer. She is a trooper by all means. If you recall, we made Sophia an honorary trooper a few months back and when are the folks at Blauer, who make uniforms saw that, asked for her sizes and made her a customized New Jersey State Police uniform, which we presented to her in person this morning on her fifth birthday.

She is five today. She's going through chemo treatments but she has the courage, perseverance and strength of a Jersey Trooper and I would just caution for the folks down in South Toms River to be mindful of the posted speed limits, because she's on the job. Thanks, Gov. Happy birthday, Sophia.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** No service revolver though, right?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** No, no.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** God bless that girl. She's part of an incredible family as well. Her siblings and her mom and dad are really special people, so to her and to her family, the Colavitos in South Toms River Community, God bless them all. Thank you for that. We'll start with Matt over here. Brendan's got the mic. Before we do, we'll be, as we've been over the past number of months, we will be virtual with you tomorrow and Sunday. We will be at one o'clock on Monday and we have a White House VTC that looks like it's at 3:30 on Monday. I assume that'll also be vaccine heavy, I would think, as well. You all had a very productive call with New Jersey's own four-star General Gus Perna and his team yesterday, and I want to continue to give him a shout out. There are folks in there doing Herculean work and by the way, not just there. Judy and her team are doing the same thing back here. Pat's got his folks out, scouting supersites up and down the state for vaccine distribution. To say there are a lot of moving parts would be an understatement, including a transition from one federal administration to another. But the folks that we deal with and Judy deals with give every indication the team on the field right now, that they're going to run through the tape. For that, we should all be thankful and salute them for that.

Okay, Matt, good afternoon.

Q&A Session

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Good afternoon, Governor. With today's numbers being a little bit of a caveat, has the rising seven-day average this week, is that directly linked to Thanksgiving? Or can you folks say that's directly linked to Thanksgiving? Has the increase sparked any concern that the state is edging closer to the worst case scenario model discussed on Wednesday?

Commissioner, I know you went over some of this, but if you could just clarify when nursing home residents would receive vaccines, and how you expect the initial wave of vaccines to be administered after the six hospitals get their doses? Maybe, for example, again, I think you touched on this but when CDS, for example, would be getting those?

And Governor you know, with PA and New York City completely shutting down indoor dining, a couple of things. Are you concerned about people from those places coming into New Jersey for indoor dining, furthering the potential for out-of-state spread? And also really what happened with the working relationship with neighbors and coordinating restrictions and things like that? I mean, you said that indoor dining is still probably not on the table, or banning it in New Jersey is probably not on the table for right now. What happened to that multi-state working together? Thanks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. The rising seven-day average, interesting, Debbie Birx didn't think we'd see the full impact of Thanksgiving until next week. I would have thought that we would be seeing it right now so I'm mixed in terms of that first question, Judy.

And then secondly, the 1A group of vaccine distribution, our healthcare workers and long-term care residents and staff, and remember that next week, whatever day it is, it's the first batch of a number that will continue to increase. As well, Moderna, hopefully they get their EUA and come online but either of those would be -- any comments, Judy, you've got.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** As far as Thanksgiving is concerned, you know, you'll see the cases, the positive cases go up before you see hospitalizations. There's a lag between the two. We're keeping an eye on hospitalizations for the next week. Hopefully they will not go up exponentially. We've been checking between admissions and discharges every day, and there's a delta of about 50 to 100. It was 50 from yesterday to today, so that's what we keep an eye on. And, you know, hopefully, we won't see a significant surge. That's how I feel. But I think it'll be cases first, and then hospitalizations and then the deaths is a lagging indicator that follows hospitalizations.

Long-term care, all have our long-term care facilities are enrolled in what they call the federal partnership program with CVS and Walgreens. They all had to select the pharmacy that would come into their facilities and vaccinate the residents that want to be vaccinated and also the employees. We expect those vaccines to start rolling off the shelves towards the end of December, beginning of January. They are definitely in 1A.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Indoor dining, so a couple things. Let me say probably the most important thing that I'm going to say about it is we still are staying with what we got, which is indoor dining subject to 25% capacity closing by 10:00 p.m. is still our policy and still what we recommend. I can't speak for New York or Pennsylvania per se in terms of decisions but it is important to point out a couple of other things.

One is when you look at the ABC list that I highlighted, and to some extent, what Pat was talking about every day, or talks about every day, we are trying to be as surgical as we can be. So if you're not doing the right thing, it may not be tomorrow, but we're going to find that out and we're going to catch up with you and you will pay a price for that. But the overwhelming amount of these folks are good actors.

Secondly, I believe outside of New York City, and I would argue we look a lot more like Westchester County or at least as much like Westchester County and Long Island, I believe indoor capacities are still 50% in those places, and remember, we're at 25%. A lot of these states that have made a big deal about pauses, they have come down either to where we were already, or took a two-week pause and brought indoor dining down to 33% and we're at 25%. So we think of the marketing, we associate the branding with our steps.

Third point, again, if you have a list of habits, I have a list of habits and mine are more indoor, particularly where you have to take your mask off, what you do to eat, the chance is we know there's risk, right? We know that the chances are higher that I'm more likely to be exposed, Matt, than you are and probably more likely to get it than you are. That was a risk that we went into with our eyes open on the Friday before Labor Day and that remains a risk. That's different than saying Judy's restaurant had 25 cases, if we didn't do anything about it, because on those we are moving as fast as we can.

So for all the above reasons, I'm comfortable, I think we're comfortable where we are. You do raise and before we move on to Daniel, you do raise the potential for unintended consequences. That is that there's people all of a sudden start coming across the Hudson or the Delaware. We've just got to watch that very closely. That was a big, big risk in the spring when we were shutting down and nobody knew how deep the abyss was or what tomorrow is going to look like. I think it's less of an issue in our anecdotal surveys. There are a lot of restaurants that are not at the 25% indoor capacity, but that's something we have to watch, clearly.

And then lastly, as it relates to coordinating, we still do a lot of stuff with New York and Pennsylvania and the other neighbors. We did something on schools a couple of weeks ago. I haven't spoken to Governor Cuomo by example this week, but his team gave us a heads up and our teams speak all the time that they were heading in this direction. And again, New York's, you know, we are the densest state in the nation so to some extent, we have elements that look like New York City, without question. But New York is one of those states, Massachusetts with Boston, Illinois with Chicago would be others where there's one big metropolis that sort of is an anchor in that state. That we don't have. We have 565 communities. We're on top of each other, that's for sure, but our largest one has only 300,000 people out of a state that has 9 million. That's a very different dynamic that New York State has or Massachusetts has with Boston, etc. Thank you, Daniel, good afternoon.

**Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ:** Hi, Governor. Good afternoon. I hope you're doing well, Happy Holidays. With the 70% vaccination in six months, is this sort of a best case scenario timeline? What's a moderate or worst case scenario for how long it could take to vaccinate the state to the point that herd immunity and when we have things like the Eagleton polls and hiccups with how it's being done in UK and potentially limited supply?

Going back to the New York City indoor dining, the Cuomo administration says that there has been a tie between indoor dining and outbreaks and cases. Do you not agree with their administration?

With you and the Senate President striking a deal on capping the taxes of the programs, what still needs to be worked out? How soon? Do you think a deal could be reached by the end of this year? And that's it. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's it? My God. I'm not aware of a plan B in our aspirations to get 70% of the state vaccinated. We want to get everybody humanly possible in the state vaccinated. 70% I believe, Tina, you'll correct me if I'm wrong here, 70% is the widely viewed herd immunity so-called threshold that people throw around.

**Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ:** I just need to clarify though, like as opposed to getting it by say 70% in six months, that timeline of late spring, early summer, just to clarify.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** We want 70% by the spring. There's just no other -- that's it. It's aggressive, it's an aspiration but that's our goal. As I said a minute ago in answer to Matt's question, if you are conducting yourself more likely indoors than out and you have to take your mask off on top of that, which you do to eat or drink, you're taking on more risk. Again, I can't speak for that. They may have particular outbreaks at restaurants, establishments, and again, we watch that like a hawk. But as a general matter, we're comfortable. Everything stays on the table but we're comfortable with where we are right now.

I will say this. This is, I've now gotten Zen and at peace about one thing that I would ask Judy to react to. The one third rail that we cannot cross or touch is our healthcare system and its capacities. We are at 3,500 and change beds right now, our high on April 14 was 8,270 COVID and remember, we had no elective surgery at that point, so that's a capacity that we do have the ability to create if we wanted to. That's the number, the ICU, the vents, in my opinion, at least, it's a hard count in a hospital, making sure that our healthcare system does not get overrun. And if we come anywhere close to that, we will take significant action. We're just not close to that right now. That doesn't mean people aren't testing positive, getting sick, going to the hospital, going to the ICU or sadly dying. That is happening. But we're not over-running our healthcare systems. As Judy said, we've got some on divert but less than we did a week ago and God willing it stays that way.

Senate President incentives, is that what you asked about?

**Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ:** Yeah, the incentives. Not that there's an agreement to kind of --

**Governor Phil Murphy:** We had a good meeting, I should have said this up front. Senate President, Speaker, Lieutenant Governor, and I had a good meeting with our teams yesterday and the teams have gone off and they're working literally through the night as we speak on trying to bring stuff to a head. But beyond that, no more comment. Other than a lot of goodwill, a lot of continued spirit of finding common ground and I salute both of those guys, and I know Sheila joins me in that. Thank you. Sir, do you have any in the back with the Yankees? No. We're coming to you, sir. Hold on.

**Reporter:** Hi, Governor. A quick question regarding the Pfizer vaccine. Do you still expect New Jersey to get 76,000 doses of the vaccine in the first shipment? When do you expect the second dose of those 76,000 vaccines to arrive? Regarding the six prepositioned hospitals, are those the only hospitals getting a share of the 76,000 doses?

The New York Times is reporting the FDA plans to issue emergency use authorization to the Pfizer vaccine this evening. If that happens tonight, do expect to get the first shipment tomorrow? Is there any reason for optimism in this week statistics, new cases and hospitalizations in that, while still elevated, have yet to show signs of a significant spike from the Thanksgiving holiday?

Also, how do you assess compliance with safety rules in Casinos? We hear anecdotal reports from workers of many customers without masks and scant adherence to capacity limits. Also, there are many out-of-state plates in the overnight parking lots. Aren't casino customers subject to the travel advisory?

Lastly, does New Jersey have any rules or protocols for deciding which patients get scarce COVID treatments like Regeneron and monoclonal antibodies along the same equity lines that are part of the plan for vaccines?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** The answer to the last one is absolutely and Judy has spent an enormous amount of time on that.

If there are specific issues on casinos, let's follow up with you afterwards. It's our sense that the casino compliance and the casino operations have been very good examples, but if there are examples you're aware of, I'd like to know what they are. I don't like hearing there are out-of-state plates overnight. I'm hoping their battery died and they went back on a bus during the day. But the answer is yes.

I'm going backward. Judy, you should answer on that last one on Regeneron. But I'd say at best cautious optimism in the numbers. The modelling tells us we're going to blast through these numbers so I'm not sure I take much optimism. I like the fact that the hospitalizations, that curve has kind of started to flatten. That would be good. I believe the first batch is still 76,000. But you should talk about timing.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** 76,000 split between the six prepositioning, and then we do expect doses every week. And by the second week, we'll have doses of both Pfizer and Moderna. If the EUA is approved, vaccine will be shipped 24 hours after the approval is published in the MMWR, 24 hours. The shipping may take 24 to 72 hours, depending on the logistics of the federal government. We are expecting Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, people getting vaccinated.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy comments as to whether or not you have cautious optimism or not? It's too early to declare that for me, at least, in terms of the numbers. But also spend a minute, you haven't done this in a while because we haven't been asked this in a while, the equity process and overlay to make sure that Regeneron, Remdesivir, other scarce drugs, the process through which they are distributed.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I have shared with you in the past that we have a professional advisory committee that is made up of bioethicists, physicians, infectious disease physicians, former state commissioners of health, and they have been meeting twice a week since March. Part of their role is not only to look at prioritization for the vaccines, but also to apply the values of justice and equity and minimizing risk and harm to the allocation of scarce resources. They did it with ventilators in the very beginning of the surge, they developed an allocation for Remdesivir. That has worked very, very well. They are doing the same for the monoclonal antibodies.

The monoclonal antibodies is a whole different way of administration. It is outpatient, early, early, early on in symptomatic disease when someone is positive. The sooner we can get monoclonal antibodies to them in an infusion center, the better the result. So there's a different process in who it goes to and how we get that out, and they're working on that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** You didn't ask this, but I wanted to say one thing earlier from the discussion with Debbie Birx. We've been saying for a number of weeks and Judy, you led us on this one and I think, Pat, you'd agree with this. Our capacities on the hard asset side are really strong right now. Beds, PPE, ventilators. We could use more testing, you know, a national testing strategy would help us. But for the most part, you know, when 47,000 tests were reporting on a single day, but the one shortage that you've been very concerned about is healthcare workers.

There was both good news and bad news I thought in our discussion. The really bad news is looking right now at a map, a county-based map of the United States whether it's hospitalizations, new cases, but the here and now data is really sobering. It's everywhere. You compare it to nine months ago, even three months ago, it's dramatically worse. This is back to the comment we made the other day, really powerful vaccine but the transmission is out of control. So we have to collectively do everything we can to bring the fire down so that the hose strength is amplified.

But, and this is the but, we've been asked about priorities on vaccine distribution, healthcare workers are in that 1A bucket alongside long-term care. The good news that came that is sort of an a-ha from our discussion, and Debbie felt pretty strongly, by the end of January, we should have been able, I think she said the end of January, I'm not sure I heard you agree with that, but let's use that as a marker. Six weeks from now we will have been able to, broadly speaking, get to all of our healthcare workers with two doses. And then you create a bullpen that right now doesn't exist. Is that fair? Yeah. So that's both really bad news and good news not that far down the road. So with that Nikita you will send us home here.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Sure. So Governor, you might not be surprised to hear it's all elections today. With Jack Ciaterelii and Doug Steinhardt and the Republican field has more or less filled out, both of them have strongly criticized your first three years in office, and neither has accepted the results of the presidential election. What do you think of the Republican field?

Nominating positions for all offices up next year are traditionally available in January, right after New Year's Day. When do you think you'll be able to say if candidates should plan on in-person petitions or to file them digitally, like they did last year, or I guess this year?

Should municipal and county governments hold reorganization meetings around January 1st, hold those digitally? And should county political organizations be planning for February and March to hold in-person conventions to award organizational ones?

And lastly, since you'll be on the ballot next year, will you be recusing yourself from any Executive Orders that might unilaterally establish rules or guidelines for elections?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I'm not sure I got all these, but let me start from the top. I reached out, as I did with Jack and to welcome Doug to the race. These are both guys I know. There'll be a time for politics. There'll be a time for good robust debate on where we've been and I think more importantly, where we're headed. But I will make the call, but that's not today. But I wish everybody well.

We haven't made any decision yet on in person versus digital, unless Parimal tells me otherwise on petitions. But I think the sooner a date is, so you asked me about reorgs in January or February. What's going on in February, March?

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** February, March is county party conventions to award lines.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I mean, the further out you're asking, the more confidence I have that we can be in a room together. I don't see a whole lot of gathering in January or February at the moment. I hope I change. Yeah, I would, as a general standing matter. I was on with our ethics person who is outstanding, Heather Taylor, on an item today. If there's anything that I think runs toward my benefit personally, I view that as a third rail, as opposed to something that I think is the right, general thing. So I'm not going to recuse myself from a discussion about early voting because I think that's just good hygiene. That's something we should have long ago had in our state. I'm not going to recuse from the fact that I think we need electronic poll books to allow us to do all the above: vote by mail, early vote, but do them on machines and same-day voting. Likewise, registrations, etc. Things that I think are for the for good of the order, as it were, I will not recuse myself just because I'm on the ballot. If it's directly impacting me, I won't go near that. I haven't and I won't. Thank you.

With that, Judy, Tina, thank you, stay safe. We'll be back together on Monday. Pat, likewise, Jared, Parimal. Dan, did I say it right? It's Monday at 1:00 I believe, right? Monday at one o'clock. And again, I'll be quick today because it's already late later than we wanted to be. Thank you for everything you've done, folks. Keep up the great work. Stay strong. Stay in the game, small holidays. Please don't let your guard down. We're not that far from the end zone here. The world is going to begin slowly at the beginning, but steadily. You look to February and onward until you get to April and May, we're in a whole different ballgame. But we've got to last from here to there. So keep up the great work and God bless.

## Governor Phil Murphy

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

### Administration

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

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

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

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

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](#)

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](#)

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

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

Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket (<http://drumthwacket.org/>)

## Key Initiatives

Economy & Jobs (</governor/initiatives/#Economy>)

Education (</governor/initiatives/#Education>)

Environment (</governor/initiatives/#Environment>)

Health (</governor/initiatives/#Health>)

Law & Justice (</governor/initiatives/#Justice>)

Transportation (</governor/initiatives/#Transportation>)

## News & Events

Press Releases ([/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news\\_archive.shtml](/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](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html))

Administrative Orders ([/governor/news/ao/approved/ao\\_archive.shtml](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml))

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

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

Statements on Legislation

([/governor/news/statements/approved/statements\\_archive.shtml](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml))

Administration Reports (</governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml>)

Transition Reports ([/governor/news/reports/approved/reports\\_archive.shtml](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml))

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

## 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 \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/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 \(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

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

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

[\(//nj.gov/opra/\)](http://nj.gov/opra/)

[\(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login\)](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

[\(https://tech.nj.gov/\)](https://tech.nj.gov/)