

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 13th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon I've got to give Reed Gusciora, the Mayor of the capital city a shout out. He had an artisan in Trenton make my mask, made one for the First Lady, so another reason we're happy to be in the capital city.

Good afternoon, everybody. I'm joined by the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, another guy you know well, Dr. Ed Lifshitz, great to have you both here. To my left, another person who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan. Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples is with us, and I'm sure we'll have Chief Counsel Matt Platkin with us shortly.

Today, we are taking the next steps down New Jersey's road back, and each step that eases us down this road is being taken because public health medical experts and the data tell us that it is now safe to do so. This is how we transition to a safe, smart and sustainable way of life. We make this decision based on what can be safely opened and operated, and we are sequencing our decisions so we can learn from them and apply these lessons as we move ahead. We want to be quick, but we have got to be right.

Today, I am pleased to announce that I am signing an Executive Order allowing for the restart of non-essential construction across New Jersey, allowing non-essential retail stores to reopen for online or phone ordering and curbside pickup, and clearly stating that drive-through and drive-in events will now be permissible under social distancing guidelines. With the first two of these steps, the resumption of non-

essential construction and curbside pickup for non-essential retail stores, both effective at 6:00 a.m. this coming Monday, we are beginning the careful process of restarting our economy and getting our state on the road back.

We were able to take these steps for several important reasons. The data shows us that we are ready for this step. As I noted yesterday, all the important metrics that we needed to see fall into place have been doing so. Let's bring them back up if we can. And again, I would point you to the top four rows here, because that's hard data and this has been updated, so this is as of yesterday. New hospitalizations are down two-thirds from the peak. Total hospitalizations are down nearly half since the peak. The numbers of patients in ICU and on ventilators are both down significantly. Positive cases, again, this is where it gets a little bit, what's the definition of the denominator? But it's still worth noting, are down 70% and deaths have decreased by more than one-third from the peak, each one of these a blessed loss of life. But the number at least, thank God, are headed in the right direction.

Let's not forget where we were only six weeks ago on April 6, when we first shared our worst-case projections. We were preparing, Judy, it's hard to almost believe this now, for upwards of 36,000 hospitalizations with 9,000 New Jerseyans in ICUs and 7,500 of them connected to ventilators. But because of your hard work, everybody, that never really came close. As we have said many times here, and we mean it, data determines dates, and the data we have seen gives us confidence that we can begin the careful and responsible restart of our economy, to get people back to work and to begin to set the stage for the steps to come.

Second, we are taking these steps because we are confident we can maintain the standards of social distancing that have been so important in meeting our data benchmarks. In other words, we have got to continue the progress that we have made. This slide bears this out. While we are not out of the woods yet, when compared with other states, we see that New Jersey still bears a significant burden from COVID-19. So keep up with the social distancing; it is essential as we move forward. Stay on this, if you could, Mahen. Again, we showed you this yesterday. This has also been updated as of yesterday, May 12. If you look at new positive cases per 100,000 persons, patients in hospitals per 100,000 and deaths per 100,000, we are without question in the pole position of the American states. That's not a position that we are thrilled to be in, but it is a reality. It reflects the density. It reflects overwhelmingly that we are part of the New York City metro reality as it relates to this pandemic. And it also tells us that while we've made enormous progress, we're still not in the end zone. We take the steps we're taking, we hope with responsibility at each step and also with the knowledge that we have to continue to monitor every one of the steps that we're taking.

At our construction sites, we know that work can resume with sensible safeguards in place to prevent overcrowding at the job site, requiring the use of face coverings to prohibit non-essential visitors from the site, to stagger work hours and breaks to limit the number of workers at one time, and to ensure proper sanitation, among other steps which we will require. And all safety protocols must be clearly posted at the job site so workers will know that their health and safety is priority number one.

At our non-essential retail stores, we are explicitly permitting curbside pickup. We can get small businesses back up and running in a manner that continues to protect both workers and shoppers. To be clear, no customers will be allowed back into non-essential retail stores at this time. They will have to continue placing orders in advance. Lots of people, let's go back to that for one sec. Lots of people reached out on this, but I want to give a shout out to Mayor Janet Hoven of Chester Borough, who was I think of all the folks that reached out, and there were many, was really articulate and responsible about making the case. I want to give the mayor a shout out.

We are stating that gatherings of vehicles such as drive-in movies or religious services are not a violation of my order prohibiting mass gatherings, so long as all participants remain in their cars. If vehicles are closer than six feet apart then all windows, sunroofs, or convertible tops must remain closed, unless the safety of the occupants is endangered. I must reiterate however, in other cases, the ban on gatherings still applies and that residents should stay at home as much as possible. By the way, you may ask me, because we're basically saying, we're acknowledging that gatherings in fact are okay in vehicles. When is that effective? By definition, effective immediately.

We were able to take these steps today because the work you have done over the past eight weeks has created the conditions that make these steps possible. Millions of you literally have taken social distancing to heart and made it part of your daily routines, and we can increase our stride because we are confident that the expanded and accessible testing program we outlined yesterday, as well as the robust contact tracing program we are implementing, will help us proactively catch and contain future cases of COVID-19 and prevent, please God, a second mass outbreak. Remember, public health determines or creates economic health, and data determines dates. That's the order of events.

The data has allowed us to determine that the date to start our recovery, however cautiously, at least the next steps, is today. And we have confidence that as we take these steps, we will keep the public's health as our top priority. Over the coming days, we will be able to take more steps. For example, we're currently working, and Judy's leading this, with doctors and hospitals on a responsible plan to reopen facilities for elective surgeries, which I hope we can announce by week's end. And as we take these steps, we ask for your continued patience. We're moving slowly and deliberately because any misstep risks further outbreaks. It's as basic as this when public health tells us it is safe to remove a restriction, we'll remove it, I promise you, but not a moment before, and I hope not a moment after. Again, we want to be quick but we have to be right. And again, there is no light switch we can flip; we can only slowly raise that dimmer. The success we've had flattening the curve gives us confidence that we'll be able to announce the end of more restrictions in the days and weeks ahead, so stay tuned.

Before we go to the numbers, I was quite struck by Dr. Fauci yesterday, Judy, by Dr. Redfield. We haven't said this in a while but if we transpose public health and economic health, or if we jump the gun, it is quite clear experts from all persuasions in New Jersey, like the two experts to my right, in the United States, and in the world will tell you that you risk igniting, reignited this fire. And we've also said even if we bat 1,000 and we get everything right, this is the sort of virus that could well come back at us. So we've got to be prepared to both be incremental in the steps we're taking, there's not gonna be one day where we say, hey, we're open for business across the board. But we also will need to rely on that very infrastructure that Judy and I outlined yesterday, the robust, scaled-up testing, the robust contact tracing so that if we see any flare up, we have a plan that you believe in, that we believe in, that can quickly snuff that out, track it down and isolate it. And that's the sort of reality we're going to be in, my guess is for months, at least. I hope it's sooner than later we can all sort of say, hey, we made it. But this is going to be something that I believe, and I think we all believe, is an incremental, one step at a time reality.

With that, let's turn to the overnight numbers. Yesterday we received an additional 1,028 positive test results. The current statewide total 141,560. Here are the trend lines that you've helped create, folks, through social distancing. And as we see the daily positivity or spot positivity rate continues to flow downward. For tests from May 9, the rate was 22%. Do you have that or not? Mahen, do you have spot? I can't tell if you've got it. In any event, spot positivity, Judy, 22%, that's a very good sign. That continues in the right direction.

Here are the daily spot positivity rates across each region of the state. Again, this is a much better way for us to look at our testing numbers, associating positive cases to that single day the sample was collected than the number we announce, which often batches results from multiple days and can skew our vision for what we're actually seeing on the ground. The map that we have been regularly turning to keeps showing slower rates of spread across the state, and that's a very good thing. In our hospitals, the number of patients currently being treated for COVID-19 is 4,226 and the overall trend line still shows and reflects our steady progress.

This is a breakdown of that very same number across regions, and here are the total hospitalizations for every 100,000 residents, again across regions, to give a more balanced picture. Our field medical stations again reported 34 patients. Looking at our long-term care facilities, which continues to be the tragedy within the tragedy here, you've got 26,763 positive cases. And then if you flip over, you've got the loss of life of 5,016 blessed souls, and we are hopeful that we may be seeing the leveling off of these numbers, please God, as they have slowed and then hopefully get down the curve as fast as possible.

The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care fell to 1,226 so it's now back to below Sunday's number. Ventilator use also dropped to 928. This represents our fourth consecutive day that ventilator use has been under 1,000. There were 364 new COVID-19 hospitalizations yesterday, but the number of live discharges went up considerably as well to 382. And here are the numbers from yesterday

broken down by region. We have said and Judy predicted this, as did Ed and Christina, that this virus would migrate North, Central to South, which it largely has. But you can see just looking at these numbers, we're not out of the woods. That's 168 people in the North region who went into a hospital in the past 24 hours for COVID-19. So again, I'm all for getting this place wide open and I'm all for the new normal, but that's a reality folks and we cannot escape that.

And again, I can't stress enough, these trends are notwithstanding what I just said, are going in the right direction and it's your doing, folks. You are the ones who have pushed these numbers and these lines downward through social distancing. And as we begin our long road back, we will need to keep it up, to keep seeing these lines move downward, and that will give us even more confidence for the steps yet to come.

However, sadly, we know there are those who will not join us for our road back. Today we report another 197 blessed lost souls from COVID-19 complications in our New Jersey family. Our statewide total now stands at 9,702 lives lost. Allow me a minute to tell you the story of a few of those lives.

First, we remember Catherine Coughlin, known by everyone as simply Cathy. She was 70 years old when COVID-19 took her. Born and raised in Astoria in New York City, Cathy would call Glen Ridge home for the majority of her life. For more than 15 years, she was a bookkeeper and office manager for Harvard Printing Press in nearby Orange. But most of all, Cathy was a devoted daughter, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend, and today only a handful are able to say their goodbye to her, so our remembrance takes on special meaning for those who cannot be together.

Her family will remember her as the person who made friends with whomever was sitting nearby, the person who joined the daily hymning at her home, at the Atrium of Wayne, and the person who took games of bingo maybe a little bit too seriously. Above all else, she loved to talk with people. She never met a stranger. Her family says she could turn a quick trip to the Bloomfield ShopRite into an hour's long affair. I believe she's Irish, Callahan, stopping to chat with everyone she ran into; neighbors, friends, ShopRite employees, it did not matter. Cathy was loved by many, including her son Andrew, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday and his partner Justin, her beloved grandchildren, her sister Ellen and brother-in-law Gary, nephew Ben, and many close friends and the caring staff at Atrium of Wayne. Her family asked me to extend their special gratitude to the staff at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Paterson for their care and compassion during her final hours. May God bless you Cathy, and all who knew and loved you.

Next up, here is in the middle, Betty Lou Dalesandro. Plainfield born and raised, she had lived in Middlesex Borough since 1974 and was known to friends and family as Belle. Belle was a retired nurse who spent more than 25 years at the Lyons Veterans Hospital in Somerset County. But when she wasn't tending to our veterans, she was spending time with her family. She passed her love of the Jersey Shore and Sunday drives to her children. She taught them to ice skate on a homemade backyard rink, how to make a gingerbread house from scratch, and even how to drive a stick shift. I could have used her. She knew how to do it all. She loved to knit and sew, and also led the reunion committee for her Plainfield high school class. Belle leaves behind her husband of 62 years, Anthony. And by the way, he has been up against it with a whole myriad of healthcare challenges that so far, thank God, he has beaten. Please keep him in your prayers, and their children Richard, Terry, Mary, and Nadine, who I had the great honor of speaking with yesterday. She also leaves eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. A life well lived and enjoyed to the fullest, Belle was 82 years old. We thank her for her years of service to our veterans. We keep her and her family in our thoughts and deepest prayers today.

Finally today, we remember Jerome Rice. Jerome was 86 years old, an Elizabeth native and Mountainside resident, and a former – once a Marine, always a Marine – a retired United States Marine Corps sergeant, who was one of the frozen chosen. During that battle he was with the 1st Marine Air Wing as a radar operator, part of the flight crews on supply transports that delivered not only desperately needed supplies, but also evacuated American soldiers. For his service, he was awarded numerous ribbons and medals.

Once he returned to civilian life, his years of service weren't over and he spent a distinguished 34 years as a member of the Mountainside Police Department, remembered, Pat, as a cop's cop, rising from Patrolman to Detective Sergeant. Service, by the way, runs in the family. Jerry's son, James, served as a Sergeant with the United States Marine Corps. A grandson, Michael, is an active Marine Corps Staff Sergeant, and another grandson, James, is a Sergeant in the United States Army Marine Corps, and many other members of the

family are first responders here in New Jersey. He leaves behind his wife, Audrey, who's standing there with him, look at that handsome couple. Daughters Karen and Eileen, sons Joseph, James and John, along with 21 grandchildren, and I had the great honor to speak with one of them yesterday, Carol Anne, 22 great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews. Jerry was an American hero. May God bless him in his years of service to our nation and our state, and may God bless and watch over him and his family.

These are the faces who will not be joining us on our road back. They won't be able to participate in our restart, or take pride in our recovery. But their spirit is what will guide us as we responsibly move forward to get our state working again. For them, we have to continue doing what we had been doing to stop the spread, to lessen the strains on our healthcare system, and to keep working together as one proud New Jersey family. We have been doing this for nearly two months now, and I know we have it in us to stick with it for the weeks to come as we slowly, yet purposefully, begin our recovery. We'll do it for Cathy and Belle and Jerry. We will do it for everyone, all 9,702 blessed souls who we have lost. We'll do it in solidarity with everyone they left behind.

And to help us remember this, I don't think I got a better message in a long time than this one from Catholic Charities in Paterson. Chris Brancato, the Development Director there, sent us this photo this morning of some of the individuals they serve in their department for persons with disabilities, sharing this message with us. And it says, "We are all in this together, so please stay home and help us stop the spread." Look at that, folks, huh? We must remember that COVID-19 is particularly fierce within our most vulnerable communities, especially for individuals, the ones that Catholic Charities serves, so let's head this message. To Chris and the entire team out there and to everyone you serve, New Jersey thanks you.

Second, I want to give a shout out to Homefront, a place I've visited and it is an extraordinary spot, right here in Mercer County. A terrific organization that works with homeless and at-risk families to break the cycle of poverty. As I said, I've visited there before and they do tremendous work. This is Donte Patterson, and he's a participant in Homefront's Hire Expectations jobs training program. Donte recently celebrated his 25th birthday, Happy Birthday, man, in quarantine at Homefront's family campus with his wife and baby daughter by becoming a high school graduate. He did it, he says, for his little girl. Donte was not going to let COVID-19 keep him from graduating and from putting himself in a position to provide his family with a brighter future. So to you Donte, congratulations from all of us. I know your future is going to be bright and as we get back on the road back, I'm so proud to know that you will be on it with us.

Before I close and turn things over to Judy, I want to speak to the revenue numbers which State Treasurer Liz Boyle and her team are releasing today, which are starting to show the tremendous impact this emergency is having on our state's revenues. April revenue collections declined 60% as compared to last April, an unprecedented \$3.5 billion. Moreover, April's numbers generally reflect a lot of economic activity from March, including the weeks before we begin the systematic shuttering of our greater economy. As we also push the filing of personal income and corporate business taxes from April 15 to July 15, what would usually be a bellwether report for how we may finish the fiscal year has also been delayed.

While we are hopeful that we will see much of the losses replaced when those numbers are reported this summer, these numbers are a sobering reminder that the COVID-19 impact is not limited to the health of our people, but also to the health of our state's finances. And we expect an increased number of filers taking extensions when the July deadline comes around due to COVID-19's staggering economic impact.

This makes direct assistance from the federal government all the more necessary, and all the more urgent. We cannot sustain a collapse of revenues without turning to unprecedented layoffs. Layoffs, by the way, of the very people we're relying upon the most at this time, our public health workers, our first responders, our educators and the dedicated state employees who have been working to make sure everyone who has filed for unemployment insurance gets the money they deserve. We also cannot sustain a collapse of revenue without gutting many of the very economic and social service programs we will be relying upon to help fuel our restart and recovery, and to get our families and our state back up off the mat.

Certainly this is one month, but we know the numbers for May, which will encompass all of April, will almost certainly bear similar or worse news. Throughout our administration, we have taken great strides to shore up our state's fiscal foundation. Back-to-back record surpluses, year-over-year savings in public worker healthcare, the first rainy day fund deposit in a decade. This report shows the fiscal cliff we are now looking

over the side of. We will continue to closely monitor our finances over the coming weeks and months as we head to the new fiscal year, which will now begin on October 1. But I cannot be clearer. Unless we have partnerships with and from Washington, I fear for what the budget will look for our state, for our businesses and most importantly, for our people. We need to be able to borrow. We are working closely with our Legislative colleagues, and we need direct federal cash assistance.

I was on the phone yesterday, I had a very good conversation with Larry Kudlow, who's the President's Chief Economic Advisor. This morning I had the honor to speak with and take questions from the US Senate Democratic Caucus. I had a conversation again with Speaker Pelosi this morning. I'm going back this afternoon to sit with Leadership Senate President and the Speaker. This is an all hands on deck moment. We need every bit of resources we can find, especially not just the borrowing we could do here through the Federal Reserve Program but boy, we need direct cash assistance in size from the federal government, and that is a theme that we will continue to harp on. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Yesterday I signed an Executive Directive that all long-term care facilities must have a testing plan for their staff and residents. I just want to make some points of clarification. Staff includes all direct care workers and non-direct care workers such as administrative, janitorial and kitchen staff, anyone that works in the facility. The Directive requires baseline testing of staff and residents to be completed by May 26, retesting of individuals who tested negative within three to seven days from the initial test, and further testing over a period of time, in line with the CDC guidance. The plan must address testing procedures and frequency, post-testing protocols for residents, and return to work protocols for staff.

By May 19, facilities must submit an attestation stating that they have developed their plans and that they've developed them by the end of the month, or May 29. And they must attest that they have implemented their plans. Failure to comply with the Directive may result in enforcement action including license suspension or revocations.

Testing in long-term care facilities is essential to control the spread of the virus and to identify asymptomatic but positive residents and staff, so that they can be cohorted appropriately. We know that 26,476 individuals have been tested and they have been identified as positive. With the partnership of several of our acute care hospitals, more long-term care facilities' residents and staff are being tested this week and next. We want to continue to collaborate with long-term care facilities to protect their residents and staff.

In April, the department contracted with CareOne and Alaris to designate facilities throughout the state deemed COVID capable. These facilities are able to properly isolate and care for patients who are positive. These facilities are accepting patients discharged from acute care hospitals. More than 570 beds have been put aside and designated for these patients, and we are working to add more. Even through some of these most difficult times for the long-term care industry, I want to thank the frontline workers for their commitment to their residents. This is National Skilled Nursing Care Week, and all workers in these facilities deserve to be recognized and thanked.

Now for my daily report. As the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 4,226 hospitalizations of COVID-19 patients, of which 1,226 are in critical care, with 76% of them on ventilators. I'm pleased to report that no hospitals in the state were on divert last evening. Of concern, as of yesterday, we were notified of 11 cases of systemic inflammatory response syndrome. You may recall, that is what in the press they are calling Kawasaki. This morning, we received seven more reports for a total of 18. That's a total of 18 children under the age of 18 years of age, between 3 years and 18, that have shown signs of this inflammatory response. They are all under investigation. We do know that the counties are Bergen, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Passaic Union and Warren. Five of the original 11 were female. I do not have the breakdown on the seven that were reported this morning. Of the ones that were reported that we've been able to investigate, four tested positive for COVID-19. There will be more reporting on that as the CDC identifies a case definition and we finish our case investigations.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 53.5%, Black 18.6%, Hispanic 19%, Asian 5.4%, other 3.4%. Underlying conditions remain the same, with cardiovascular disease and diabetes mellitus being the most prominent.

We now have 522 long-term care facilities reporting cases of COVID-19. At the state veteran homes, among a census of 662, there have been 364 residents testing positive and a total of 137 deaths. Our state psychiatric hospitals report similar to yesterday, 194 patients testing positive and a total of 12 deaths. The daily percent positivity as of May 9 for New Jersey overall was 22%. In the North, it's 23%, the Central is 24% and the South, 16%. That concludes the statistical report.

Overall, our statistics have shown that social distancing has helped us slow the spread of the virus in our state. We are all eager to resume our normal activities, but we must continue to practice the precautionary measures that have been protecting the health of our residents. Please continue to stay at least six feet from others. Do not gather in groups. Stay away from crowded places and limit close contact with others outside your household in indoor or outdoor spaces.

Social distancing is especially important for people who are at higher risk, those with underlying conditions such as heart disease and diabetes and lung disease and older adults. Please continue to wear your face covering in public settings. We know the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity, for example speaking, coughing or sneezing. And remember, you can transmit the virus, even if you do not have symptoms. So stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. On the Kawasaki front, we'll have more of this. That was sort of hot off the press. We'll have more to report as we learn more. I want to welcome, as I predicted, our Chief Counsel Matt Platkin is here, but also our Chief Technology Officer Chris Ryan is here. Chris, I didn't recognize you behind your mask. Thanks for being here. There you go. Thank you. And Judy, thank you for your leadership, as always. With that, may I turn to Colonel Pat Callahan for any update on compliance, PPE, infrastructure or other matters, Pat, thank you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor, good afternoon. Generally a fairly quiet night with regards to compliance. Newark issued one EO violation and issued 213 warnings as well. In Irvington, a non-essential furniture store was shut down. In Passaic, a non-essential massage/spa was shut down. And lastly in Secaucus, Secaucus police responded to a 911 hang up with screaming in the background. An emotionally disturbed subject was found. She spit on three different officers and was ultimately taken to a hospital for an evaluation.

And just if I can go a minute off topic. With that in mind, I just think it's important to note that just because there's a pandemic, that law enforcement across the state and country still have to respond to things. 911 hang ups, domestics, fatal accidents, and today's a special day in our country's history. May 13th always denotes the National Law Enforcement Candlelight Vigil, where upwards of 40,000 people gather to light a candle to note the lives and sacrifice of nearly 22,000 law enforcement officers from Darrius Quimby, the first law enforcement officer ever killed in the United States in 1791, when he was stabbed trying to arrest somebody on a trespassing warrant, up to and including all of those others that have made the ultimate sacrifice. Tonight, we were supposed to be there with Rosie McCoy, the widow of Staff Sergeant Brian McCoy, marking the seventh trooper in five years that we've had their names engraved on that National Law Enforcement Memorial, but we will be doing it virtually this year as a country and as a globe. I thought it was important to note May 13, not only as a moment in time, but also to remember that we don't have the option in law enforcement to stay home. That when the bell rings, we need to go and I just thought that was worth mentioning, because we're at a 28% increase as of May 13th today compared to last year in law enforcement line-of-duty deaths, 28% increase. To those who think otherwise, we took an oath and we are here to uphold it. Thanks, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. That is as poignant as it gets. At least 11 of the lives lost have been lost to COVID-19, is that correct?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: That is correct.

Governor Phil Murphy: This is not theoretical, it's not abstract. It's real and as you said, Pat, members of law enforcement, God bless you all, particularly those whose lives we have lost and we remember. But it's not optional as to whether or not you answer the bell. You answer the bell every single time out.

We're going to start over here but before we do, we are likely to be together at one o'clock tomorrow. Thursday's always a day that, Judy, Pat and I might be on with the White House. At the moment, we have not heard. I'm looking at Mahen. Unless you hear otherwise, we'll be here at one o'clock tomorrow. I assume again on Friday and again on Saturday, and we'll stay with the regular pattern.

If you all could limit, just so we can get through this. We've got a big crowd here today. Nikita, good afternoon.

Q&A Session

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Good afternoon. Governor. I'll surprise you and say that I only have one question today.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hold on one second.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: I think 30-odd towns had municipal and school board races yesterday. We saw turnout go up across the board, but we also saw increased numbers of ballots being thrown out. We saw some –

Governor Phil Murphy: Increased number of what, sorry?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Increased numbers of ballots being invalidated or thrown out. We saw allegations of voter fraud, or concerns over voter fraud, in a couple of towns. We are also seeing many mail-in ballots take a week or more to arrive. I'm wondering, generally, what are your takeaways from yesterday?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I'd say good question and I'd say it's largely too early to give you a full answer. But we need to make a decision on the July 7th elections, so you can imagine we're digesting yesterday pretty aggressively. I was back and forth with the Secretary of State yesterday, both during the day and last evening, we did some amount of post-mortems today. I texted or called some of the winners to congratulate them. I don't have a good comprehensive answer. I will be surprised, today's Wednesday, I'll be surprised if we don't have a more comprehensive answer, especially as it relates to July 7th, by the end of this week. So if you could bear with us, we're still, again, digesting, but assume that we'll – Matt Platkin is back there. Matt, would you agree by the end of the week, I think we'll be able to have an answer, would be my guess. Matt's nodding his head. Thank you for that. Sir.

Reporter: Thank you, Governor. On the unemployment front, we are being inundated with emails and calls, social media, with New Jerseyans reaching out desperate for help. Your own social media accounts are inundated with people that are desperate, they can't pay their bills, feed their kids, their savings are gone, weeks without a check. How is this acceptable to you? You have said that they will get every penny and that we are ahead of other states, but that doesn't really matter if you can't feed your kids. Tell me what specifically is being done to fix the unemployment issue?

As for the road back and reopening, are you comfortable that the numbers have gone down enough and they're strong enough to ease the restrictions?

Governor Phil Murphy: There's not a whole lot more I can tell you about the backlog of unemployment. We're going to have the Labor Commissioner with us tomorrow because it's Thursday when the numbers come out. You've taken the words out of my mouth. New Jersey, I think is by many measures ranked at the top of American states of plowing through the backlog, and that will mean nothing to anybody who still hasn't gotten their benefits. We've been very clear about that. This is a tsunami, unlike any that any state has ever, our country has ever dealt with before. I would just say to folks, you will get every penny, including the federal piece, and I don't blame you for being frustrated.

The numbers are allowing us to take incremental steps. I think we've been pretty clear that the numbers have improved, and then you look at the density of realities of positive cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities per 100,000 residents. It's also quite clear that we're not out of the woods yet. So we cannot just start flipping light switches. We think these are responsible, incremental steps, and we take our guidance first and foremost from the two folks to my right and their teams, as well as input nationally. Judy mentioned she was on the phone explicitly on some of this with Dr. Berx yesterday, and so we think the steps we're taking are responsible steps, given that we're sort of in that balancing reality. That we've made meaningful progress,

there's no other way to put it. But we're still, also there's no other way to put it, that we're not in the end zone yet. We can't go full bore and we're not going full bore. Thank you. Why don't you come down to Matt in the front here, if you could, Brendan? Matt, good afternoon.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Governor, I'm curious what the state has done to transfer testing supplies to nursing homes. Some have said they have not received any guidance. Also curious if Medicaid would cover the costs associated with that testing? Today's announcement or clarification with gathering in cars, is that something that school districts can do for graduations? Curious about that.

You mentioned an announcement on elective procedures coming later this week. Just curious about what else you folks are looking to announce in terms of hard dates that could come out later this week?

Finally, just if you have any update on any numbers of the amount of people who signed up online to work as contact tracers?

Governor Phil Murphy: We can find that, the last question, can you get that literally as we're sitting here Mahen? That number is probably gettable, so bear with us on that last one. I'm going to address, and you'll tell me whether or not I get this wrong, Pat, cars and gatherings. And either Judy or Pat on the transfer of the supplies to LTC as well as Medicaid coverage.

The answer is yes, as long as you stay in the car, correct?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: That's correct.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, the answer is yes, Matt, as long as you stay in the car. I wish I could say, I've got a high school senior who came out to me today and I would love to be able to say, you're all set to be able to gather face to face, but we're not there yet. I would hope that by the end of the week we've got guidance on July 7 election, elective surgery, Judy, I think by the end of the week, and beach protocol. I had a very good call. We've been keeping them posted the whole way and I can't say enough good things about the cooperation we've had from the Shore counties and the Shore mayors. We had another really good call yesterday. You know, they're suggesting, we've got really good suggestions from them, as well as concerns, obviously, that they're raising. So I'd say beaches would be on that list.

Mahen, any answer on the contacts? We're still looking, contact tracing? He's running over to get a microphone. While he does, any idea of the testing supplies and the status getting to LTC, either one of you?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: As early as this morning, after our 10 o'clock call, I reached out to FEMA and got a response with regard to not only the PPE and testing kits. They are currently working through 16 vendors across the country to get that. We have asked the long-term care facilities to let us know as part of their daily reporting, so we're tracking that as well, which then feeds into that algorithm and allocation method that we use every day. It's not like everything's coming all at once. It is a very phased approach on those deliveries, Matt.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, do you want to add anything to that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're doing a full inventory of what they need so that we can match that with the inventory that Pat takes control of every day. On the Medicaid and any insurance, there is a registration process that's been developed. We used it in South Jersey. There will be a billing of both Medicare and Medicaid for the patients that will be getting tested, and it covers collection and testing.

Governor Phil Murphy: And remember, the target date to get universal testing at LTCs, including staff, is May 26, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: By May 26, definitely by the end of the month.

Governor Phil Murphy: How many folks have signed up to contact trace, Mahen?

Communications Director Mahen Gunaratna: We have 21,111 signups so far.

Governor Phil Murphy: That's since yesterday?

Communications Director Mahen Gunaratna: Correct?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, thank you, Matt. Elise, let's do you and then we'll go, ma'am, in the back if you can bear with us. Good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi, good afternoon. Can you talk a bit more about your conversations with Larry Kudlow and Nancy Pelosi? And did the April revenue report have any effect on the timing of your order to ease restrictions on non-essential retail and construction? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thanks, Elise. The answer to the second question is simply no, unrelated. It's something that we had been, we've got a series of steps that are logical priorities based first and foremost on health. And I think, Judy, it's fair to say that non-essential construction, curbside pickup, driving, drive-throughs and drive-bys, electives, those have all been in the earlier sets of steps that we thought we could take responsibly when the data showed us that we could, so it did not.

Larry, by the way, who's an Englewood native, by the way, so a lot of Jersey blood in the White House these days, he's yet another one of them. Good conversation, it mostly centered around the feds lending facility. That's something that we are keenly interested in taking up. That'll be a subject of our discussions. In fact, there's a working group meeting going on right now, which Matt had been a part of, on borrowing. We've got a leadership meeting, as I mentioned, later on this afternoon. So it's largely, it was a little bit more broad in terms of economic outlook, but it was far more focused on taking advantage of the fed lending facility.

With the Speaker, it was a follow up on our conversation, we've had a number of them at this point, but a follow up on our conversation from Saturday. She called this morning just to get my reaction to the bill that was dropped yesterday, which was a very positive reaction. We put a statement out. I did it on my own, and then on behalf of the Democratic Governors Association. I mentioned I had a call this morning with US Senators in the Democratic Caucus. I reiterated both support for Senator Menendez's bipartisan bill, as well as the Speaker's bill in the House. They both have big chunks of direct federal cash assistance, and I just reiterated the case for that. The Speaker's bill also has a lifting of the cap on SALT deductions for a couple of years, which is a big priority for us, as we've mentioned, as well as for members of our Congressional delegation. It was a good conversation in both respects. Thank you. Hello, ma'am. Hold on one sec.

Reporter: Okay, a question about the contact tracing. Is that something that's going to be done by phone, electronically? That's one part of the question. The other thing is isolation. You touched on it yesterday, what the CDC is saying as far as isolation. Are there going to be enforcement of isolation or anything like that? The other thing, one more thing from the Jersey Shore people, obviously the beach is important to us to be reopened, but what about the municipal pools? Will you also be addressing that, and private swim clubs?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep. I'll start and, Judy, feel free to come in here. Contact tracing is a combination of both talking to you on the phone as well as technology, is the short answer. We made a big point yesterday, and I give Judy enormous credit here. The folks who are on the other end of the phone are going to be folks who are community based, who look and live and are, in fact, the New Jersey that they're reaching out to, and Judy can add more on that.

I think we said yesterday and if we didn't, my bad, but we're still working out the elements of the isolation piece of this. We will get a fuller picture of that as soon as we can. Pools came up on the call yesterday with counties, Shore counties and Shore mayors. Matt, I'm not sure, is that still something under consideration? That's still, I think we're gonna have news on that probably tomorrow is my guess, or Friday, right?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: It's still under consideration. I'm not exactly sure when.

Governor Phil Murphy: We're not there yet. By the way, very compelling cases made by a couple of the mayors, including the very act of filling up the pool so that it's not a cement pit, whether or not folks can use the pool, but all that to be determined. In fact, Matt tells me you can fill the pool up as of now, but we'll come back to you with guidance in terms of usage or not.

A big concern about, you know, capacity and whether or not you can use pools as a way to level the capacity challenges that folks will face, but if you could bear with us on that. Judy contact tracing and/or isolation, any thoughts?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: On contact tracing, as the Governor mentioned, there'll be phone and technology. But there also may be, in limited cases, face to face if required, particularly as we see the pediatric cases increase, there may be a reason to do that, obviously, with all of the protections. I can give a full report on isolation and quarantine, and how the municipalities, the counties, and State Department of Health have put together a statewide complement of bed spaces for those that cannot appropriately do that at home. I'd be happy to do that. I can do it offline, or I can do it tomorrow. Whatever your pleasure is.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let's keep moving today and maybe we can come back to it. Is that all right? Does that work?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Sir, do you have one? Yes, please.

Reporter: Two for you, Governor. Minority Leader Jon Bramnick has called for public hearings conducted virtually to question health experts and members of the administration on when and how New Jersey should reopen. Would you support this? And also, Senator Vitale has called Commissioner Persichilli, Commissioner Carole Johnson, and General Mark Piterski to testify on long-term care facilities. Will you allow them to be questioned by the Senate Health Committee? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I got no insight into either of those. I was asked about John Bramnick yesterday and I said, just as a general matter, we know it takes a village here. We can't do everything on our own and we never expected to, and we need our Legislative partners. We need our federal delegation. We need the Trump administration. We need nonprofits. We need everybody. This is an all hands on deck moment. I don't have any specific comments on either Jon or Senator Vitale, which I just have learned about myself. But the fact of the matter is, we know we get there together, and that's the spirit, and that includes across the aisle. That's the spirit with which we have been conducting ourselves, and that's the spirit which will continue. Thank you.

Nothing? Are you sure? Okay, Dave, we're down to you. Down front here. Brendan, you look like you're in an Olympic trial there. I'm not sure for what, but please.

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Governor with regard to the retail curbside pickup allowances that you're announcing today, some people don't understand the logic of this. I know you've said it's one step at a time, it's incremental. But people are in supermarkets wearing masks, social distancing, capacity is limited and this, for many retail stores, it would be easier to keep people further apart and limit the numbers. If you could just talk about the logic specifically about this whole situation?

As the COVID crisis is continuing, more and more people, especially as the weather is getting warmer, seem to be unhappy about this or that. You've got lawmakers raising points, you've got petitions to allow different graduation situations. You've said repeatedly you're looking at facts, science, data, and you're trying to save lives. Are you getting depressed at the increasing amount of questioning that you're facing? Does it start to wear on you? Is it frustrating? I mean, how do you deal with this? You're a human being just like everybody else in here.

Final question for the Commissioner who needs no introduction, you told lawmakers, I believe, Commissioner, that if a resident of a long-term care facility dies of COVID in the hospital, the death is counted as a hospital death. One state Senator is unhappy about this. He believes that it's skewing the totals and incorrectly showing that there are fewer long-term care deaths actually, and more general population deaths, which he took issue with. Could you explain that? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Do you want to jump in on that one first, Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure. Actually, I'm going to send it over to Ed. He's the keeper of all of the data, particularly on deaths.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Thank you. First, let me say that as we get data from long-term care facilities and other places, we always consider that to be provisional, because investigations are still ongoing and numbers will change. No number that we put out today I would consider to be final.

With that being said, the information that is given to long-term care facilities actually that if they have a resident who dies in the hospital, they're supposed to count that as having died in the facility. Those should actually be counted as a facility death, not a hospital death.

Governor Phil Murphy: Dave, on the first question in terms of -- thank you, Ed -- in terms of logic, and by the way, we're not deliberately, may I just add to this? We're not deliberately trying to do anything with the data other than to present it, as unvarnished as we can and as accurately as we can. There's no hiding the pea here, in any respect. The good, the bad, and the ugly and I think that speaks for itself.

The curbside logic continues to be this. First of all, give us credit, we just took a big step so these stores will now be able to do this. We're still in a stay-at-home mode. We're still stay at home unless you have to go out. And having said that, and so by the way, you've got to eat, you've got to go to the pharmacy. There's certain obvious exceptions from day one that are essential, and we get that. This is a step in, I think, a positive direction for all those retailers who are deemed to be non-essential. I think it's a responsible one. We just don't want people congregating. I just don't know how else to say it.

I said this yesterday and I'd love to be -- I don't have a chart to show you -- but if you look at the, and Ed and Judy, I'm practicing without a license here, so forgive me. If you look, when you start to go down the backside of the curve and you look at any moment in time that you dramatically lift social distancing restrictions, and what the impact is in terms of where the virus that curve then heads, versus if you held on for another 14 days, it's dramatic. It is dramatic. And Ed and Judy live this, and so we want to drive this thing, we want to drive this sucker as hard as we can, and the least amount of congregation we have, or the less amount we have, the better. It just is that simple. The faster we'll be able to really get back to business.

If you get depressed, politics would be the wrong line of business. So as a general matter, you have to have a thick skin. Listen, everyone's entitled to their opinion. I don't begrudge that. I don't agree with everybody. We're doing what we've said we would do. We're doing our best to balance all the various realities. As I said earlier, the first two slides speak to that balance more than anything else right now.

Enormous progress on hospitalizations, ICU, ventilators, etc. on the one hand. And on the other hand, New Jersey is still in the pole position of American states in terms of positives, hospitalizations, and fatalities per 100,000 residents. There's no other way to say it than that. Our job is to shoot as much as we can down the middle of the plate, as responsibly as we can. Others are entitled to their opinions. We'll continue doing what we're doing, whether it's popular or not. We're not here, this is not a popularity contest. We're up here to save as many lives as we can, and responsibly at the same time, get the place back on its feet. But thank you for asking.

Real, real quick, Brendan, Dave only because he --

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Just a follow, if I may, Governor. But do you go home and does it wear on you? I mean, you come in here, you're pretty good energy. You know, lots of smiles, lots of encouragement.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, listen, I'm like anybody else. I'm a human being and this is an incredibly difficult chapter in our country's history and our state's history, maybe the most difficult, arguably. It occasionally gets to you but at the end of the day, the responsibility that I've got, that we have got, all of us, and I'm no different than these folks, by the way, is to keep moving. We've got to get through this, save as many lives as we can and responsibly get the state back up on its feet as fast as we can. But I appreciate your asking. Sir, how you doing? Anything?

Reporter: Sorry, I lied, I do have one.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll give you one.

Reporter: Just the one.

Governor Phil Murphy: This is a complete protocol violation, I want you to know.

Reporter: The FDA recently approved the first COVID antigen test, which is cheaper than the PCR test and can provide results in 15 minutes. Some experts say the antigen tests are the key to reopening state economies. Is New Jersey looking into purchasing these and making them readily available?

Governor Phil Murphy: I know Ed is more qualified to answer. Is that going to be shocking news, that Ed's more qualified to answer that than I am?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: When you talk about testing for COVID, as we've As we said before, there are two ways you can test. You can test for the virus itself, or you can test for the body's response to the virus. To this date, the only way that we could test for the virus itself was looking for the virus' RNA through what's known as a PCR test. The antibody tests, that's what tests for the body's response to that virus.

The antigen test that you're talking about now, that is a second way to look for parts of the virus itself. That would be a way that theoretically could tell you whether somebody is currently infected with the virus itself. Yes, we do think that this test, and the first one was approved and more will be coming along, will certainly play a role. The issue with it is, in general, they tend not to be as specific, meaning they're insensitive. Meaning they're less likely to pick up if somebody has the virus. So you may have the virus, that test may come back saying you don't, and you're more likely to have it there than on the PCR test. We think that they certainly play a role, and we're learning more as more of these tests come online at this point, as to whether we'd be recommending purchasing or we'd say wide scale that we should be going that way rather than a rapid test, rather than all these other tests. At this point, no, we do not yet have a conclusion as to what our recommendation would be.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Sir.

Phil Andrews, NJ News Network: Good afternoon, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon.

Phil Andrews, NJ News Network: How you doing there? This question is kind of in light of what Colonel Callahan said earlier about May 13. With police academies closed, is there any concern in the near future of replenishing some of the forces throughout the state?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it?

Phil Andrews, NJ News Network: Yeah, I'm going to make it short.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Dou you mean as far as law enforcement agencies?

Phil Andrews, NJ News Network: Law enforcement, fire academies, obviously, like schools there.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I think the Governor's said it all along with regards to not having, beyond healthcare workers, those first responders impacted. I mean, we have, even the class that we have in specifically to the State Police, to hold on to 190-plus recruits in very creative ways to support this effort, we're going to keep asking for troopers and I would imagine police chiefs keep asking for law enforcement and fire and EMS, because again this, although unprecedented, I said it before, we can't stop answering the 911 calls or going to fires or going to medical assists or going to car accidents. That need will not diminish. It'll always be there. I would imagine that we keep on doing our best to keep training academies staffed with all those first responders.

Governor Phil Murphy: Is there any evidence that this has impacted the pipeline of folks who are raising their hands saying they want to be a first responder?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: That had happened nationally across the last few years, myself and the Colonels, we get together. The recruiting of law enforcement officers, men and women, very difficult in this day and age whether that's a combination of the scrutiny that we're under, which I think is a factor. I know of no other profession that asks you to put a camera on and go out 24/7 and deal with some pretty tough situations. The recruiting across the country has really gone down in the past few years.

I think the commissioner can talk, you might see a spike in recruiting of not only nurses and doctors and law enforcement, because sometimes it's almost like after 9/11 when you saw folks sign up and say, you know what? I'm joining the military because I want to support our country. I'm hoping that's the case at the other side of this pandemic, that we see a spike in recruiting and not a dropping off.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm a big national service guy, and I believe this is a little bit same church, different pew. I think there's a coming together right now. I would agree with that last point. Do you see that with folks who want to become a healthcare worker, Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I mean actually, our enrollments for nursing programs were up to begin with, but I think you want to be part of this and you want to be a hero. The student nurses that are coming out to help volunteer to go into long-term care is remarkable. It's something you want to be part of.

Governor Phil Murphy: In the face of, without question risks that each and every one, on each side of me and what you represent take every day right now. Thank you for asking. John, you'll take us out. Good being with you last night. Thank you for having me.

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Thank you. Governor, the White House reopening plan says the state should be looking at a two-week decline in ER visit data where patients are reporting COVID-like or flu-like symptoms. That's data that's being reported from hospitals to the federal government. Are you using any of that data in your decision making now to start this reopening? And if so, can that data be public?

Governor Phil Murphy: Was that ER visits?

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: ER visit data, yeah. The Kawasaki syndrome, have any deaths been reported? How many of the children are still hospitalized? And yesterday, Governor, you said you expected the price tag for contact tracing to be hundreds of millions of dollars. Will any of that be funded and handled by The Bloomberg-Johns Hopkins partnership? How much are you depending on for federal dollars for that? Any state dollars into that mix as well?

And on the budget numbers you put up, you said 60% off year to year, but can you tell us how much it's off from your projections that you needed for the current fiscal year?

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, I'll take a couple of these and then do you want to come in behind me? On the last one, I don't have that but we can get that for you. Although I don't know, Matt, would we have budgeted? I don't know that we would have budgeted monthly revenues, but perhaps. We'll come back to you on that, John.

No, the Bloomberg Philanthropies or Bloomberg Foundation, I'm not sure where this is coming from, and by the way, I want to give them a big shout out again, are working with Johns Hopkins on sort of general information training stuff that we're using as opposed to funding programs directly. I think that's a fair way to put it. We are hoping for a big support from the federal government. We've got to do it anyway, we have no choice, but we were very much hoping for a big slug of federal money. Matt, do you want to weigh in on that?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, in the COVID 3.5 Bill that passed a few weeks ago, that was principally the Small Business Bill, there was a substantial amount of money for testing in New Jersey on a per capita basis, based on the formula, did as well if not better than every other state. That's purely testing and contact tracing money, but we do have that available, or will, rather.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, I'll say this and hand it to you, but I think we've felt that hospitalizations, ICU beds, ventilator use has been a better barometer collectively for monitoring this, as opposed to ER visits. But that's obviously your expertise and I assume you've got the answer on the Kawasaki question, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'll start with the Kawasaki question and then I'm going to let Ed share with you the types of monitoring CDS does on people presenting in the emergency room. Of the 11 cases that were reported yesterday, we do know that all 11 were hospitalized. I don't have any data on the seven that were reported this morning. Ed.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, no fatalities that we know of?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No fatalities, no. I'm sorry, no fatalities.

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: And I just want to say quickly one word about the Kawasaki thing as well. You'll hear it called Kawasaki. You've heard toxic shock syndrome. More commonly now you're hearing pediatric multi-system inflammatory syndrome. These are all different

names for the same thing that we're kind of learning about. I do want to make one thing clear because I actually had this question come in. Kawasaki syndrome is a rare, serious illness that involves the pediatric population. Coxsackie virus is a very common infection of younger children that causes what's known as hand, foot and mouth disease so I don't want people out there, parents out there to get concerned, oh my child had Coxsackie. Coxsackie is very different from Kawasaki, even though they sound somewhat similar.

As far as the question about emergency department visits, yes, that is something that we do monitor. It's what's known as syndromic surveillance. We look at it over time. This is data a little bit old, from a few days ago, but it kind of goes through that and you can kind of see the fall down in emergency department visits related to that. So yes, that is data that we do monitor regularly.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thanks, John. Thank you all. I'm going to mask up here. So again, non-essential construction, drive-through, drive-in, non-essential retail curbside pickup we hit today. I would hope that tomorrow we'll be together at one o'clock, Mahen? Tomorrow and/or Friday we'll be able to take some steps on elections, on beach guidance, elective surgeries. We'll also have the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development Rob Asaro-Angelo with us tomorrow to discuss not only the Thursday results, but also the general progress we are or we're not making. I think we've made a lot of progress but that folks are frustrated and I don't blame them.

Keep doing what you're doing, folks. While we're not out of the woods, we have made an enormous amount of progress. There's no state that's made the progress that we have, and that's because of you all out there. Bless you and thank you. Judy, to you and Ed, thank you, as always. Pat, likewise, Jared, Chris has left, Matt, the whole team, Mahen, thank you all. God bless you all. We'll see you tomorrow.

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