

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: June 30th, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lkl-r-LPg8> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lkl-r-LPg8>)

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everybody. My apologies for being a couple of minutes behind here. With me today, the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli, to her right, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. Great to have you both here. To my far left, another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan, and we are joined by the guy immediately to my left, special guest today, welcoming him back, the President of the Board of Public Utilities, Joe Fiordaliso. Joe, great to have you.

Part of the reason I'm a couple of minutes behind today, I did something very cool today. I was in Elizabeth, New Jersey with Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage, with Port Authority Chair, Kevin O'Toole, with the French ambassador Philippe Etienne, and we received Lady Liberty's little sister, which is way cool, so it's a smaller version of the Statue of Liberty. It came into Port Elizabeth. It will get to Ellis Island tomorrow, and it will stay on Ellis Island facing the big sister from July 1st to July 7th and then it will be transported down to Washington, D.C. where it will live at the French Ambassador's residence, which is visible from the street, and that will arrive on Bastille Day, July 14th. It was a really special event. The original Statue of Liberty – by the way, this Statue of Liberty came in one piece. The original Statue of Liberty came in 1885 but was not ultimately put together and christened until 1886 because it came in 200 pieces, so it took a year. This one's going to take a day. President Grover Cleveland presided over the original one. How do I know that? Joe was there in fact at the event, and he had a front row seat. Grover Cleveland is the only American president, by the way, born in New Jersey, so there's lots of reasons to celebrate including our great relationship with the Republic of France and I want to thank Ambassador Etienne for inviting us and all of us doing that together today. Very cool.

Back to Joe, in the here and now, Joe. Over the past year the BPU has played a central role in protecting rate payers from utility shutoffs, whether it be ensuring that families had electricity to heat or cool their homes or clean water or internet access for students attending to their studies remotely. We thank you, Joe, and all of your colleagues, but Joe is with us today because the Board of Public Utilities just took a huge step to further our efforts on climate action, propel our progress toward a 100% clean energy economy and bring significant economic benefits to the state, and cement New Jersey's leadership in offshore wind industry. Growing our offshore wind industry generating 7500 megawatts of electricity through offshore wind by the year 2035 is one of our key priorities, and today the BPU approved the nation's largest combined offshore wind award in our history bringing the state's total planned capacity – Joe, if my math is right – to over 3700 megawatts of that 7500-megawatt objective.

The results of our second offshore wind solicitation will triple our total offshore wind capacity and strengthen our commitment to securing good union jobs. It will make New Jersey a national leader in the offshore wind industry. Through you, Joe, to you personally and to your entire team, I thank you for your leadership. We are putting New Jersey on the map as a truly global hub for the offshore wind economy and market from the supply chain and manufacturing right through to electric generation, and today is a huge step for clean energy, for climate action, and for a strong economy. We'll hear from you in a couple of minutes, Joe, and it's, I think, only fitting at this point that I – before we move on to acknowledge the fact – I just got off the phone a short while ago with your executive director Paul Flanagan at the Board of Public Utilities, who's hanging up his spikes today, which is – what a day to hang your spikes up. Paul has served the BPU and served under a number of administrations and done an outstanding job. I asked him what his life's next chapters were. This is pretty cool. He and his wife are getting in a car, and they're driving across the country to visit their son who lives in California who has grandkids and expecting twins in October. I said Paul, that's as good an answer to that question as you could possibly ask for.

Next up, I want to acknowledge an important guy in our lives, Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, who announced yesterday that he is leaving our administration to join the Biden administration as Director of the Division of Enforcement at the Securities and Exchange Commission under the leadership of a many-decades friend and former colleague Gary Gensler. For the past three years, Gurbir has been an outstanding Attorney General. He has stood up for New Jersey to protect our healthcare, our immigrant communities, and our environment, and he's taken on bad actors to keep guns off our streets. He has also worked alongside Pat and to restore the trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, and moreover, Gurbir has been a friend. I, and I think we, all of us, wish him the very best as he winds down his service here in New Jersey over the next several weeks and prepares for the challenges ahead in Washington. Our nation is lucky that he will be leading the fight to protect investors and ensure fairness in our financial markets. God bless him.

Today, I am further pleased to announce that first assistant attorney general Andrew Bruck, that guy right there, will step in to serve as acting Attorney General for the remainder of our four-year term. A graduate of Princeton University and Stanford Law School, Andrew worked at both the Department of Justice, serving as senior counsel, deputy chief of staff, and acting chief of staff to Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates and the US Attorney's Office right here in New Jersey prior to joining the Attorney General's office in 2018 as executive assistant attorney general. Over the past three and a half years, Andrew has played a leading role in our efforts to build trust between communities and law enforcement and to stand up for New Jersey's residents in the face of attacks from Washington, D.C. This being the last day of pride month, I should also note that Andrew will become the first Attorney General in New Jersey history to come from the LGBTQ+ community. This reflects our continuing commitment to ensuring that our state government reflects the rich diversity of our residents and fellow New Jerseyans. I look forward to working with Andrew and the tremendous team that the Attorney General, in this Gurbir Grewal, has put together to continue our mission of ensuring one of our core values: equal justice for everyone who calls our state home.

Now let's take a quick look at our vaccination numbers. Today, as you know, is June 30th. This is the day we had originally set to meet our initial goal of having 4.7 million individuals who live, work, or study in New Jersey fully vaccinated. We met that goal 12 days ago, and today we are reporting that number: 4,940,812 fully vaccinated. I should note that today's number – and we've been fastidious about this, and I give Judy and her team credit. We want to make sure we're telling the whole truth, nothing but the truth, and the accurate truth. Today's number includes a reconciliation of out of state vaccination record, some of which have been double counted in previous reports. Regardless, where we are today is a tremendous accomplishment, and we know that there are still many of you who are going to add to this total and push us over the five million mark I think in a matter of days, by the way, because you are just waiting to get your second dose of either Pfizer or Moderna's vaccines.

If you have not yet started on your vaccine journey, now is the time. We cannot say it enough. The vaccines are proving themselves safe, effective, free, accessible to everybody regardless of your immigration status. Our own state data shows that there are more – they are more than 99.9% effective in preventing illness and even stronger against hospitalization and death. Especially with the emergence and spread of the highly contagious and dangerous Delta variant, now is the time to get vaccinated, especially if you are a younger person because we see from reports across the country, Judy, never mind here in New Jersey, that this variant is hitting young people particularly hard. Do it for your health and the health and safety of your family.

If you take the step to get vaccinated before the week is out, then you will also qualify – I feel like I'm in one of those Ginsu Knife commercials. Act now by July 4th, and you will also qualify to receive a New Jersey State Parks Vax Pass from the Department of Environmental Protection as a token of thanks, and with your Vax Pass, you will be able to spend your Fourth of July weekend down on the short at Island Beach State Park or lakeside at Swartswood State Park or at any state park that charges for entry or parking free of charge, but to get your Vax Pass, you have to have received your first dose by Sunday, July 4th. By the way, Derek Roseman told Dan and me today the number of folks who have participated in this program is now up to over 119,000, so it has made a big difference.

This now brings us to the rest of today's numbers. Again, according to the data we have on the overall effectiveness of vaccines, these numbers are being driven almost exclusively if not exclusively by the unvaccinated, so here goes. 223 positive PCR, 95 presumed positive antigen. Rate of transmission is .95, spot positivity 1.49%. In our hospitals yesterday, 247 were COVID confirmed, another 49 under investigation. 53 folks in ICUs, 29 of whom are on a ventilator, and you can see that while 35 people walked out – live patients were discharged yesterday, which is great, another 26 actually entered our hospital. We are also reporting with the heaviest of heart eight more confirmed deaths due to COVID-related complications, and the number of probable deaths has been revised to 2,703 between confirmed and probable, we have lost a total of 26,457 New Jerseyans to this virus over the past nearly 16 months. Let's tell the stories of three more of them now.

On February 19th, we lost a decorated member of our community when Lawrence "Larry" Manning passed at the age of 80. He was born and raised in Jersey City and had called Toms River home in his retirement. Larry served a stint in the United States Army and upon his return home embarked on a distinguished 25-year career as a member of the Jersey

City Police Department. He was a true believer in lifelong learning and was an avid reader, soaking up whatever he could, but most of all, he loved being with his family, especially the time spent alongside his wife Ruth – and I had the great honor of speaking with Ruth on Monday – across 59 years of marriage. Also with her, he has left behind their children, Jeanmarie, Brian, Larry, Sean, and their spouses and his grandchildren Brian, Jaqueline, Hannah, Dallas, Sean, Grace, Dennis, Ava, Zoe, and Alexandra. Larry battled COVID in the hospital, Judy, for two months and finally succumbed, and by the way, his sons – two of his sons, Larry and Sean – and this is for Tina as well, got COVID positive. They got it a while ago, and they have significant residual issues that they continue to deal with as we've heard from so many. God bless them all. We thank Larry for his service to our nation and to the city of Jersey City and may God bless and watch over his memory and his extraordinary family.

Next up, we'll go a little further down the shore to Ventnor, the long-time home of Earl Panico, who was just 60 years old when he passed two days before Christmas. Look at that guy. My Lord, this virus can hit anybody. Earl was a navy man, as if I had to tell you that through and through, from his time rowing crew at the academy in Annapolis to active duty to his years spent as a member of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service with the US Navy Reserves. He ultimately rose to the rank lieutenant commander and served as president of the Navy League. While he was on active duty, Earl earned an MBA from the University of Tennessee, which he then turned into a fine career as a vice president and financial advisor at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter in Northfield while in the reserves. Earl was predeceased by his wife Dr. Bonnie Mazur and is survived by his son Nicholas, along with eight brothers and sisters and numerous nieces and nephews. I had the honor of speaking on Monday to one of his brothers, Dr. Frederick Panico, and he reminisced about what a great guy Earl was. May God bless Earl, and we thank him for his service to our nation and for a career spent helping his neighbors prepare for their futures.

Finally today, we remember Dr. Cassandra Ann Pistorius of Marlton. She was 69 years old when we lost her on January 5th. She was born in Whatley, Alabama and found her way North to New Jersey more than 50 years ago, shortly after her marriage to her Husband, the guy on the left there, Fred. Education was central to her being. She earned a bachelor's degree at Temple University while simultaneously serving as a reading specialist to teens in Philadelphia and then went on to receive a master's degree from Rider University right down the street here in Lawrenceville all the while while she and Fred raised five children. When she hung up her teaching hat after 35 years, she didn't stop learning. She went back to school to study pastoral counseling and got her doctorate from Newman University and spent the rest of her career counseling disadvantaged youth. She was proud and devoted to her Catholic faith and held numerous lay positions in the church, including as a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary for the Knights of Peter Claver, the largest historically black lay organization. Her lifetime of service spanned from volunteering to the NAACP in the 1960s to memberships in the New Jersey Garden City Alumnae chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. among numerous other community-oriented organizations including Mobile's African-American Heritage Trail back in her native Alabama.

She left behind to carry on her legacy her husband Fred and their children Myles, Derrick, Justin, Branden, and Jennifer and their spouses along with her seven grandchildren Nathaniel, Julia, Lila, Andrew, Henry, Olivia, and Kristopher. She is also survived by her mom. Please keep her in her prayers, Mary Lee, and her adoptive father Byrnes Milligan, Sr., along with her two sisters Jaqueline and Jennifer, and her two brothers Jerald and Byrnes and many other extended family. I had the great honor of on Monday speaking both with Fred – and you can imagine how busted up he is – and one of their children Myles. It's a point of Jersey pride that Myles is now in his seventh year as the senior vice president and general counsel for the Miami Dolphins. We trust that God has blessed Cassandra for a life spent in the service of others, and we are grateful that she chose New Jersey as her home.

Now moving on for several months, we have been highlighting the community-based foundations and non-profit partners who are working through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's Sustain and Serve NJ program to fight hunger in their area while supporting local restaurants. Today we put the spotlight on the AtlantiCare Foundation in Atlantic County, which has been supporting the health and wellness mission of AtlantiCare's regional health network for the past 44 years. I should note that AtlantiCare was our healthcare partner – Pat and Judy know this – in the operations of the Atlantic City vaccine megasite where both Tammy and I received our vaccinations. Throughout the pandemic hunger hasn't just been an issue for impacted communities. It's also been an issue for many of our frontline healthcare workers whose tireless efforts to save lives often left little if any time for a full, healthy meal, and that's where the AtlantiCare Foundation stepped in.

They partnered with the EDA and received a grant that allowed them to purchase meals from restaurants near their medical center campuses in both Atlantic City and Pomona, near their ambulatory facilities, near the satellite emergency department that they run in Hammonton, and numerous other sites across south Jersey that AtlantiCare serves. These meals made sure that doctors and nurses and healthcare support staffers were all getting the emergency – and the energy rather needed for the jobs they had to do. They also stepped up to support the teams working at the Atlantic City megasite. I caught up recently with the two women on the right, the Executive Director Samantha Kiley who's the picture

furthermost up, and then on the right side, Jennifer Tornetta who's in media relations. I spoke to the two of them on Monday, and I thanked them for all that they and the AtlantiCare Foundation are doing to support our frontline workers as we wage this fight against COVID, so to each of them I say thank you.

Finally today, I want to take a moment to wish one more happy retirement to this guy, Chet Chinsky, who is today stepping away from his desk as the Director of the Division of Labor Market and Demographic Research for the Department of Labor after more than 26 years of service. Chet's team has always been important for us across administrations, I might add, to understand New Jersey's labor market by putting complex issues into a clear picture. They've been especially vital over the past 16 months as we've tracked the impacts of the pandemic on our state's workforce and looked to get our folks back to work. Chet will now have more time for his family, especially his two grandsons Harrison and Henry, and I believe that is Harrison in his arms. The example of public service he set his family will on – will live on, rather, because his daughter Alex Altman is a key member on our team, and Harrison and Harry – or Henry, rather, are her children. Chet, I hope you're watching. I tip my cap to you and wish you the very best. Congratulations on your retirement. Thank you for your decades of service to our state and its people, and I know Alex will continue to carry on the family tradition as she has from moment one and do outstanding work in our administration.

I'll leave you with a quick program note. We will be with you virtually for the next week, and we'll be back here at this table one week from today, Wednesday, July 7th. As we know, Monday, July 5th is a national holiday in honor of our nation's independence and after next week, we will at least through the month of July – and we'll keep you posted. We're going to drop down to one in-person briefing per week, which will be on Mondays, right here starting on Monday, July 12th, so to all of you, I wore my pocket square here today or kerchief in honor of our nation's independence. I wish everybody a long, enjoyable independence weekend. Please be safe, please be responsible, please have fun, and please get vaccinated. With that, please help me welcome the guy to my left, the President of the Board of the Public Utilities, Joe Fiordaliso. Joe, welcome.

Board of Public Utilities President Joe Fiordaliso: Thank you, Governor, and it's good to be here with you. I do bring greetings from President Cleveland. As you know – I know you know, but some folks may not know, President Cleveland was born in Essex County in Caldwell, New Jersey, and his father was a minister, and the old home is on Bloomfield, Avenue in Caldwell.

Governor Phil Murphy: The only US president to be born in New Jersey.

Board of Public Utilities President Joe Fiordaliso: That's correct. Woodrow Wilson was born in Virginia. Another one I knew well.

Governor Phil Murphy: I wasn't going to rub it in.

Board of Public Utilities President Joe Fiordaliso: Today's a very exciting day for New Jersey. Not only for us currently here but for subsequent generations, our children, our grandchildren, and their children. As the Governor mentioned, the Board of Public Utilities today awarded 2600 megawatts of offshore wind, and the awards went to – Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind Company, received 1510 megawatts. Ocean Wind received an award of 1148 megawatts. Combined, once these turbines are in the water, they will supply power to 1.1 million homes in the state of New Jersey, and the 1100 megawatts that we awarded last year will supply power to 500,000 homes. We're at approximately 1.6 million homes that are going to be energized by offshore wind, and we will have solicitations every two years until 2028 until we reach the 7500 megawatts which we anticipate all of them being in the water by 2035. 7,500 megawatts of energy generated by wind turbines. It's all because of the vision and the leadership of our governor. I want to thank him personally for laying down that vision that allowing the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to carry that football down the field. We're not down the field yet. We have a way to go, and we will continue to carry that ball until we reach the end zone because it's too important. Failing at this is not an option, not an option at all. We're very, very excited, and Governor, I took the liberty of inviting the man who really helped to spearhead our solicitations and so on Bureau Chief Jim Ferris is out in the audience. Jim?

Governor Phil Murphy: Jim, well done, man. Congratulations.

Board of Public Utilities President Joe Fiordaliso: We have a fantastic team, as you know, at the Board of Public Utilities, people who are dedicated to the vision of providing 100% clean energy by 2050. Both projects had strong environmental protection plans, and with our requirement of a 10,000-dollar-per-megawatt contribution for research initiatives and wildlife and fishery monitoring in the region, the Board of Public Utilities and the Department of Environmental Protection will manage a 26-million-dollar fund to ensure our work to combat climate change through offshore wind and protect our environment, protect the wildlife. That is out there. I also want to give a shout-out to the Economic Development Authority for being one of our partners because this is a full government effort. It's not just one department. It's not just one agency. It's a whole government effort, and it has to be a whole state effort where we all

have to join together to mitigate the effects of climate change, again, not just for future generations, and I really believe that we have a moral obligation to do everything humanly possible to mitigate the effects of climate change.

In 2022, the Board of Public Utilities anticipates opening a third solicitation for offshore wind of at least 1200 megawatts to continue delivering on the Governor's commitment to 100% clean energy by 2050, and we will get there. We will get there together as a state, and it is extremely important that we all join together to move that ball down the field.

Governor, I want to thank you for your visionary leadership on offshore wind and in clean energy in general. I've always said when I've had the opportunity to introduce you that we have the greenest governor in the United States, so thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Joe, thank you for your leadership and, Jim, another shout-out to you and your team. Joe, we wouldn't be here without you. This is a big, big day, and I think one of the things we should be – in addition to the overall theme of this is a big amount of energy, it's clean, all the climate change bona fides that will come from this, all of which is great. I think you are to be commended as well because these – this will create thousands of good paying, union jobs, and we are the quintessential union state, and secondly, you all and Jim and team have taken the concerns of some of the communities that have raised their hand and say they've got concerns very seriously. You've got a plan to address for instance commercial fishing, which is a gem in our state, and we don't want to blow that, or the folks who have some visual concerns, and I commend you and the team for working with folks and finding creative solutions to address those. Great work. Great to have you here. With that, please help me welcome the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon. With high vaccination rates in the state allowing residents to participate in more activities, we can expect to enjoy more of a traditional Fourth of July. However, it is important that we still celebrate safely. Although case numbers have been relatively flat, COVID-19 is still circulating, and while the COVID-19 vaccine is extremely effective, the increases in the variant reports are a cause for concern. On our COVID-19 activity level report, the CALI report, coming out this week, most of the state is seeing moderate COVID-19 activity. The central west and southeast regions are seeing low activity. These regions cover the following counties: Cape May, Atlantic, Cumberland, Hunterdon, Mercer, and Somerset Counties.

Given that we are still seeing COVID-19 cases in the state, we must take precautions to protect our health and the health of our loved ones. That starts with getting vaccinated, so if you haven't yet received the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit covid19.nj.gov/finder and locate a site where you can get vaccinated. As many family and friends are gathering this weekend to celebrate our country's independence, as much as possible, schedule your gatherings outside. It is particularly important to gather outdoors with guests outside your household who may be unvaccinated. Mask wearing, particularly by unvaccinated, should be encouraged, and physical distancing of at least six feet should be maintained from those who don't live with you. Unvaccinated individuals are encouraged to wear masks in most indoor situations. While fully vaccinated individuals are encouraged to resume normal activities, they should not be discouraged from wearing a mask for higher-risk activities such as being in a crowded indoor location. As with any respiratory virus, it's vital to practice good hand hygiene. Washing your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and avoid touching your eyes, your nose, and your mouth with unwashed hands. If you aren't feeling well, please stay home.

We know a lot of people will be traveling this week and throughout the summer. CDC recommends that you delay travel until you are fully vaccinated. The federal government requires individuals to wear a mask over your nose and mouth on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation. Per the CDC recommendations, vaccinated individuals traveling within the United States do not need to get tested or self-quarantine after travel, but they should self-monitor for symptoms. However, the agency recommends that unvaccinated individuals who cannot delay travel should get tested one to three days before their trip and three to five days after their travel. Additionally, the CDC recommends that these individuals should self-quarantine for seven days after traveling and avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness. Avoid being around them for 14 days. Fully vaccinated travelers are less likely to get and spread COVID-19. However, international travel poses additional risk and even fully vaccinated travelers might be at increased risk for getting and possibly spreading some COVID-19 variants. When traveling internationally, individuals should wear a mask and practice physical distancing to reduce the risk.

The CDC requires all air passengers arriving in the United States from a foreign country to get tested for COVID-19 no more than three days before their flight departs and to present the negative result to the airline before boarding the flight. It is important that we continue to take precautions so we can see case numbers go further down in our state and we can all resume so many of the activities that we enjoy during the summer season. It is also important to take usual summer precautions: wearing sunscreen and insect repellent, certainly watching your children around pools, practicing grill safety, and monitoring temperatures of foods during cookouts to prevent food-related illnesses.

Summertime is also a season when we see blood donations decline in our state, but the shortage we're seeing right now runs much deeper than the usual summer slow-down. Blood donations dropped during the pandemic, and we still have not recovered from the suspension of blood drives in the workplace, and community events, and other important sources of donations. At the same time, our hospitals are experiencing a pent-up demand for services as people catch up on surgeries and other treatments that they may have delayed during the pandemic. A single blood donation can provide a life-saving gift to three people, including cancer patients, trauma victims, and women delivering babies. The need for blood never takes a vacation. Let's take care of each other and donate blood.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals report 296 hospitalizations of COVID-positive patients and persons under investigations; 53 individuals are in critical care. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children and our veterans' homes, there are no new cases among residents or staff in the residents' homes, and no new cases at our state psychiatric hospitals among patients. As of the date of June 26th, New Jersey daily positivity is 1.49%; in the northern part of the state, 1.41%; the central part of the state, 1.78%; and the southern part of the state, 1.24%. That concludes my report. Please continue to stay safe. Get vaccinated to protect yourselves, our family and friends, and enjoy a safe Fourth. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. You reminded us in a way that we haven't really – I – we haven't done this in a while. Do the basic stuff. That still matters. It certainly matters for COVID, but it matters for general public health, right? If you don't feel well, take yourself off the field. We haven't said that in a while, so I've just – seriously, don't – and wash your hands with soap and water and especially if you're not vaccinated, you got to wear a mask and you got to social distancing. Thank you for that. Thanks for the reminders.

Pat, I mentioned the Lady Liberty event, which was pretty cool, in Elizabeth. We were outside on a concrete slab for about 55 minutes, and it's a – I just dried off about five minutes before coming over here. In any event, this is going to break. I think we got some serious thunderstorms potentially, but what do you got on that or any other matters? Great to have you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Yes, today we're expecting heat index values of up to 107, so as you said, it's brutal out there. I want to remind folks that the cooling centers – I actually went on NJ211 myself today just to check. Most counties have cooling centers open, whether it's a mall, whether it's a library, various locations. I direct folks to NJ201 not only for that but for those with special needs can go to 211 and call 211 for assistance, and I encourage those with special needs to register at registerready.nj.gov, and that way if power goes off and they rely on a ventilator or oxygen concentrator, President Fioliso knows that our service providers prioritize those with – that are registered.

I also, in this heat, just – it's tragic that we see it, though, but people leaving children, and adults, and even pets in cars. Not even for a minute can that happen. Really just a strong word of caution with regards to leaving anyone or any pet inside a vehicle when it's as hot as it is out. Remind folks about rip currents as well. In that hurricane season, we're watching two tropical storms right now. I know we haven't talked about *Frozen* in a while since our last blizzard snow storm, but the next one up on the queue is Elsa for those fans of *Frozen*. With the holiday weekend coming, Governor, I'll just close with this: that we will have troopers out there in various capacities, not only on our highways, on our lakes, on our waterways along the coast, making sure that those traveling and having recreational boating and going to see fireworks – we will have additional patrols from Sussex all the way down to Cape May, again, DWI patrols, checkpoints on the water. To the Governor's point earlier, have fun and be safe. Being out on the water is no place to be under the influence, so we will have troopers out there throughout the entire Fourth of July weekend making sure that everybody does have a safe Independence Day. Thanks, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. Thunderstorms?

State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan: Thunderstorms are probably going to roll in starting tonight into tomorrow. It's actually a cold front over the next few days, which'll break this heat and thunderstorms expected the next few days, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Just to underscore, we said this, Summerville, like we were yesterday, for last Fourth of July, enjoy it. Have fun. God knows you've earned it, but do it irresponsibly and don't be a knucklehead. I mean, just don't drink and drive, and that includes – and I don't know why this is but folks think when they get on the water that there's a chemistry change and they're able to do that. You're going to have people out there. I know local and county officials will be out there. Just don't do something stupid, folks. Thank you, Pat.

We're going to start over here with Brent. Remember what I – I kind of brushed over this. We won't be – obviously Monday's the national holiday, so we'll be with you a week from today at this hour, 1 o'clock, and then the week after that so the week beginning July 12th. At least for a period of time, we're going to go down to one a week. It'll be Mondays at 1

o'clock.

Q&A Session

With that, Brent, good afternoon.

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: What does it mean that the – good morning or good afternoon. What does it mean that the Delta variant hasn't spiked – caused numbers to spike here despite the fact that we have no mask mandates and major restrictions anymore? Is there anything new on the smoking ban in Atlantic City casinos? I know you get asked about that a lot. What is your response to sources who say there was some sort of friction between your office and Attorney General Grewal's office over the last few years? Is that overblown? What are your thoughts?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not sure I understood the first question. Come on back, Ruth. How do you square –

Brent Johnson, NJ.com: We haven't seen – the Delta variant is spreading in other parts of the country and we haven't seen it explode here even though we have no masks anymore in public and no restrictions. What is the cause for that?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think the big reason – I mean, ask Judy and we got to make sure Tina gets her money's worth. I think the big reason is our vaccination rates are as high as they are. You're seeing it spike. I mean, this is like – this is not speculation; it's correlated. If you look at under-vaccinated communities and states and caseloads, they are perfect – almost perfectly correlated. If you want to add anything to that – I assume vaccination rates is our friend here, right?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Vaccination rates are our friend. In general, that increasing vaccination coverage will definitely help stem the spread of variants. I think we've heard this message time and again that just to reiterate the message, please get vaccinated. Until you're fully vaccinated, make sure that you take the appropriate precautions like masks and social distancing. Just to say that we are seeing an increase in the proportion of Delta variant not only throughout the US, Delta is the second-most abundant variant nationally right now preceded by the Alpha variant, B117. Here in New Jersey, we're starting to see an increase in the proportion of Delta variant as well. We have to do our part to help stem that spread.

Governor Phil Murphy: I also think – Judy mentioned this – that – and we haven't said this in a while, either, but let's all remember if you can be outside, that's a huge plus. As a northern state, we don't have that. We don't have that opportunity for half the year. Right now, the combination, I would think, between high vaccination rate – folks, by the way, to your credit, doing the right thing generally and also our ability to be outdoors for a lot of life helps.

Smoking bans, so the bill that I signed, Brent, that ended the public health emergency included a sunset on, among other things, the smoking ban, which is effective – Parimal, correct me if I'm wrong – on Monday – Sunday, July 4th. It's one of the few things that wasn't a month end or a month beginning. That will sunset on its own on Sunday. I would just say if you – you didn't ask it. What's my – the follow-on question would be would I be open-minded – would I be constructive on legislation because I need to do this statutorily that would come – that could come to be in the future to extend that ban or make it more permanent? I would be very constructive on that, but that will sunset on Sunday. I got the dates right?

I don't know what the basis of that notion about Gurbir and our office. I think we've had a really good relationship and importantly, not just with him. We had a, Pat, I thought a very good meeting yesterday with you, Jen Davenport, one of his senior folks, and Gurbir and our team to talk about some of the proactive steps we can preemptively take as it relates to gun violence in the state. Jen's another example. Andrew Bruck is a great example who's going to be acting – he – we not only have a good relationship with him personally, but he's built a very strong team that we have a good relationship with. As I mentioned, whether it's gun safety, whether it's community policing and engagement between law enforcement on the one hand and the communities they serve on the other, whether it's really, frankly, more in the Trump era where we needed somebody to stand up on behalf of our interests or the interests of many communities in the state. He was outstanding. I flat-out – at one level, I'm very sorry to see him go but on another level, it's a great opportunity for him. At the end of the day, the country will benefit.

Good afternoon. You got any?

Reporter: Afternoon.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon.

Reporter: What is the state's next move to try to block the PennEast pipeline now that the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of the pipeline? Countries and cities who are following the World Health Organization's recent guidance say that unvaccinated and vaccinated people should wear masks indoors. As the Delta variant continues to spread, will you reinstate indoor mask regulations to curb transmission rates? What kind of variant or what kind of variant activity would

you need to see to reinstate masking or other forms of infection control? Finally, is the state considering adding back the requirement that those on unemployment must be actively searching for work and prove so to combat the hiring crisis? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think – and Parimal will correct me if I'm wrong. That's always been an attestation that someone is receiving benefits has to make, I believe, weekly – that they're doing that. You agree with me? That's the case in New Jersey. I can't speak for other states, but that is the case as it is already.

On PennEast, disappointed. There's no other way to put that with the decision. I thought it was well-argued by, I might add, the Attorney General's team, speaking of the team. The good news is we have another – a lot of other tools in our toolbox that we can deploy. I don't have any news to make yet on that, but we will stay at this one and as we have news, specific steps – on specific steps, we'll share it with you.

As usual, it's not variants, per se, although we track the variants. It's overall caseload. It's how many people are getting sick, positivity rates, rates of transmission, hospitalizations. That's what we'll – Judy and Tina should correct me if I'm wrong. Those are – there's a collection of metrics that we follow, not specific only to variants. Therefore, there's not one data point that we have ever hung our hat on that this is – this will trigger a certain action. I hope we don't have to go back. We would not have taken the steps we've taken with any expectation that we would have to go backward.

We're the only state in America that has not lurched; in other words, taken a step and then pulled back from it. I hope that we can keep it that way. If we have to, we will, clearly. We'll continue to monitor the data points that we've talked about every time we've been at this table for the past 16 months, and right now it's hard to argue anything other than we are in really good shape, and we just hope it stays that way. Tina just mentioned the Delta variant is not just an American challenge; it's a New Jersey challenge, especially, again, if you're not vaccinated. This is a pandemic of unvaccinated people right now and the more folks we can get vaccinated, the better. Anything you want to add to that, Judy? Tina, you good with that? Okay, I got – gratifying if you're in my shoes to get that.

Dave, last but not least, you'll take us home.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Thanks, Governor. With regard to your comments, Commissioner, about wearing masks inside and trying to do everything outside, people that are fully vaccinated may hear this and go wait a minute; why? Could you just spell out for us and maybe, Governor, you can chime in as well on this – is it just the Delta variant? Is there something else going on? Is it just a matter of you don't know who is inside with you and whether they're vaccinated or not? Also, what about younger children that don't have the opportunity to get vaccinated yet? How much of a significant issue is that in terms of spreading the Delta and other variants? Early on when Delta showed up, we were hearing that kids were more likely to pass this. It was more contagious for younger children. They may not have symptoms but they were – the transmission was with that age group.

With regard to wind farms, Joe, maybe you could talk a little bit about – you had mentioned the \$26 million fund that's being set up to monitor the environment and wildlife, but what we've heard is that the electromagnetic field can influence and change the travel patterns of certain types of fish. Whether we're monitoring it or not, I mean, would the monitoring to be just to see if that's happening and if it is happening, what could we do about it? We're already building these wind turbines. There's also concern with regard to sonar and whales and that the sound of the turbines will significantly influence their behavior and confuse them. That could be an ecological disaster. Governor, I know you've lived as the former ambassador to Germany in Europe for quite a while where wind farms are more prevalent. What's been your experience with regard to these issues about – concern about wildlife especially with the turbines?

Part and parcel with this, it has been told to us that costs will increase initially for wind power because you got to get them set up. There's going to be a certain amount of increase, but in the long run it's a good thing. Could you be a little specific or more specific and let us know for the average Jersey resident, how much of an increase are we looking at for wind power? How long are these cost increases going to continue? Again, there's been questions raised about this, whether it really economically does make sense or not. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Dave. Let me start and then will respectively hand things to Judy and Tina and then to Joe. I think on masking indoors, is the question I conclude – again, we're not – let's remember where we're requiring it. You have to – and again, this is CDC guidance; this is not just a Jersey thing. This is planes, trains, buses, healthcare facilities, long-term care facilities, other indoor vulnerable community locations such as prisons. I don't want to put words in your mouth, Judy, but I think my answer would be you don't know who's in the room when you're inside, so better to be safe than sorry would be my angle on this. You heard us on Monday say that we're not going to, as of this moment, require masking of kids indoors, but we're leaving it to the districts to – given their particular situations, which I think has worked well because no two districts are alike, to make whatever decisions that they feel like they should make based on their local reality. In all circumstances, no requirements that would prevent Monday through Friday full-on in-person school again.

Real quick, Ruth.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: I was just wondering with regard to, for instance, Fourth of July celebrations, the kids are running around. They're inside the house There's 20 kids on top of each other and they may not be masked.

Governor Phil Murphy: Understood. Judy, anything you want to add color-wise to that?

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli: Unvaccinated individuals, we're really encouraging them to be as vigilant and careful as possible. That's the biggest risk. They're not vaccinated. On the other hand, if it's your immediate household and you're indoors, it's fine, whether you're vaccinated or unvaccinated. If it's people that you don't know whether they're vaccinated or not and you're indoors, be smart. Be vigilant. Be careful.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the one – thank you. On the wind front, I'll just give you a couple thoughts and then turn it over to Joe. The \$26 million fund I think is – that's an example of the creativity that I think Joe and Jim and their teams put towards this, because that's not something that's getting done in a lot of places that would deal with some of the very questions that I'm certainly not – I am neither an epidemiologist or a whale expert, so I promise you I don't have the specific answer to that, but the notion that we're taking that seriously, taking fishing seriously, commercial or otherwise, I think is a hallmark of Joe's leadership. The one thing I can comment on is the German/European experience is a very good one. The big difference in Germany and indeed many countries in Europe is that there is a significant onshore wind reality in addition to significant offshore assets. I don't know how much you want to get into the costs right now, Joe, but you should address it as you see fit. One of the shout-outs I gave to this guy and his team at the top of our gathering today is that they have been really diligent at protecting the rate payer. This is not just a good for the environment, it's not just a job creator, including building a lot of these components in New Jersey, but this has got to work for the rate payer. I think Joe and his team have been really good at that. Joe, take it away.

Board of Public Utilities President Joe Fiordaliso: Thank you, Governor, and thanks for the question, Dave. Let's look at the financial aspect first, if I may. Clean energy costs money. There's no getting around it. However, as time goes on, those costs diminish. We see it in the solar industry, as an example. I can build a solar industry today or a solar array today for half the price for what it cost it 2007, so costs come down. When we look at the clean energy industry, we also have to look at the economic benefits that we're getting, the thousands of jobs that are being created, the infusion of billions of dollars into the New Jersey economy. New Jersey being geographically situated to such a point where we will – and this is our goal. We will be the supply chain for the entire East Coast as far as offshore wind is concern. You can just imagine the amount of money, the amount of economic enhancement that's going to occur, and the number of jobs that are going to be created, extremely important.

When we look at clean energy, I submit – I would submit that we have to look at both. What's the cost but what's also the economic benefit that we're getting? What's the environmental benefit that we are getting? We have to approach it in a holistic way, in my opinion. I think that's extremely important.

As far as the environmental aspect is concerned, we're working with our friends in Europe and Denmark, as an example, who has a – been – has a wind industry for 25-plus years. They've done a lot of studies and what you're suggesting has not been a factor that we know of as of now. Also, we have been working very closely with the Department of Environmental Protection to protect not only our recreational fisheries but also our industrial fisheries because this is an important economic tool in the state of New Jersey. We want to ensure the fact that in no way are we subjecting that industry to any kind of disaster. That is not our intent and if that happens, we'll have to figure out how we're going to remediate that.

We're also working with the shipping industry as far as shipping lanes are concerned to ensure the fact that their access to the second largest port in the country, Newark-Elizabeth, is not in any way hampered. We're working with a whole bunch of industries to ensure the fact that to the best of our ability, we're creating, not destroying.

Governor Phil Murphy: Joe, thank you for that. I think Dave, one of the things – it's up to you, Joe and Jim. Maybe you guys want to go to a sidebar after if you're interested in any more color on that. We got to – I think we ought to close things down on that basis.

I want to thank, as always, Judy and Tina for being with us. Joe, great to have you. Pat, as always, Parimal, Dan, Ruth, the rest of the team. I'll mask up here just to say we wish everyone a great Fourth of July long weekend. Again, enjoy it but also be responsible. Have fun and get vaccinated. I don't know what else we can tell folks. The weather's going to be a little bit choppy but God willing, it's going to be good enough for us to enjoy the shore and our lakes and our main streets. Wherever you are, thank you for everything you've done by the millions over the past 16 months. Have a great American birthday weekend. God bless y'all. We'll see you a week from today.

Governor Phil Murphy

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