

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: September 5th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



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Governor Phil Murphy: We've got a full house here, folks. We'll get right at it. Good afternoon. 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, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan; great to have you both. The guy to my left who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan.

As the Department of Health noted yesterday, we are continuing our work to receive all the information we need from the White House, the Republican National Committee and the management of Trump National in Bedminster with regard to our contact tracing efforts following last week's fundraising event with President Trump. We have received the list of the 206 attendees at the two separate events held in Bedminster, and from the golf club we have received the list of 19 staff members who were involved in these events. New Jersey residents are our top focus, but we are also working with the CDC to contact all out-of-state attendees.

All attendees have been notified that they may have been potentially exposed to the coronavirus and informed that they should self-monitor for potential symptoms. We are asking that all attendees self-quarantine for 14 days, especially those who were in close contact with either the President or a member of his staff. We have also urged attendees to get tested no earlier than five to seven days after the event, which would mean a testing window from tomorrow through Thursday at the earliest. We know it can take up to a week or even longer, and Judy and Tina can pile in here and add to this in their remarks, for the virus both to incubate and for an infected person to test positive, so even a negative test taken within this window should not override the need to self-quarantine for a full 14 days. Based on the information that the DOH shared with attendees, the CDC feels we have completed the initial outreach and will standby to assist further if needed. I hate acronyms, I just used two of them. So the Department of Health and the CDC in Washington.

The Department of Health under Judy's leadership, in partnership with the Somerset County Health Department and local officials in Bedminster is leading the contact tracing efforts within New Jersey. This includes notifying the staff at the golf club and we have particular concern for them, considering the potential for spread within our communities since this is where they live. This is very much a race against the clock.

As with everything, the Department of Health treats this data and information with the utmost protection and does not share the list beyond those who need this information for follow up. We certainly hope and pray fervently that no confirmed cases come out of the event in Bedminster, and we continue to send our best wishes and prayers to the President, the First Lady, former Governor Chris Christie and all who have tested positive over the weekend. This is not a matter of politics, but a matter of humanity.

But this is also a matter of leadership by example, and it is clear that the President and his staff acted recklessly in coming to New Jersey in the first place, knowing that they had been exposed to someone with a confirmed positive test. As I mentioned in some interviews this morning, while it is hitting close to home, this is not the first time we've seen that absence of leadership, or the only time. This is the latest chapter in a long series of chapters over the past seven months with things like developing and engendering a political debate over masks, as an example, when there should be none associated with it. This is based on science, data and the facts. It has nothing to do with politics, and yet that has been allowed to take hold.

Additionally, reports suggest the event itself may not have complied with our current rules, which may have put others at risk, and we continue to investigate these reports. Any failures to comply with our emergency orders will be referred to the Attorney General Gurbir Grewal for follow up. To put it bluntly, the actions leading up to and during this event have put lives at risk.

Next, switching gears but sticking with the Department of Health, the department is today releasing, again under Judy's leadership, its guidance for local officials, schools and outside organizations and businesses to help ensure a safe Halloween for our communities. Yes, Halloween is on. First and foremost, the department is encouraging everyone to wear a mask that covers both the nose and mouth. And no, Pat that Jabba the Hut mask that you were considering is not a substitute. A costume mask does not count as it does not provide the necessary level of protection. The department's guidance also strongly encourages that instead

of placing treats directly in the bags of trick-or-treaters or filling communal bowls that multiple hands will reach into, that treats be arranged in such a way that they can be quickly and safely accessed without multiple pieces being touched.

We are also strongly encouraging all Halloween activities to be outdoors, as we know that the biggest threats for viral spread exist indoors. And as always, parties are subject to both indoor and outdoor gathering limits. You may wish to dress as a knucklehead this Halloween, but we don't want anyone to act like one. For Halloween activities such as hay rides and corn mazes, the department is also providing guidance for their safe operation as well. We know that in numerous communities, Halloween is more than just a fun activity, but a real tradition. We want to ensure that everyone has the chance to enjoy Halloween but we also want to ensure that everyone does that safely and responsibly.

Next, switching gears, in response to schools going all or partially remote, we have received numerous reports of dance studios, martial arts studios, churches and other locations providing remote learning supervision services for children during the school day when their parents are at work. Under state law and regulation, these setups are in fact childcare centers that need to be licensed. However, the Department of Children and Families recognizes the growing need for these services. It has created emergency regulations to allow these centers to undergo an expedited licensure process so they can operate legally for the duration of the public health emergency or until the end of the school year, whichever comes first. The department stands ready to assist these facilities in moving through this process. We want to ensure that every family who needs childcare services during remote learning times has those services within reach, and we also want to ensure that these facilities are properly prepared to meet the needs of both students and families. I thank especially Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer and her team for taking these steps.

And also on the topic of childcare, the Department of Human Services has increased the income threshold for families seeking childcare tuition assistance during remote learning school hours from \$75,000 all the way up to \$150,000. This will allow more families to receive the support they need to afford childcare. The application for this assistance can be found at childcare.nj.gov/covid19. I similarly thank Commissioner Carol Johnson and the team at the Department of Human Services for their efforts to expand this vital assistance.

Next, an announcement that is not related to COVID-19, but one that is related to an issue that has been discussed over several years, and that is the bear hunt. As I have noted in the past, this is a complex issue, and one that my team and Commissioner Catherine McCabe and the Department of Environmental Protection have been looking at carefully in partnership with the New Jersey Fish and Game Council, which actually has the authority over the hunt. Today the council has proposed an amendment to the game code that will suspend the bear hunt following the conclusion of the 2020 season, and would remove the current comprehensive black bear management policy for the game code. This would allow the Council and Department of Environmental Protection to engage in a thorough and complete review of current scientific data in developing a new black bear policy that promotes public safety and welfare, while protecting important wildlife with a focus on non-lethal management techniques. This means that the 2020 bear hunt, already limited by the way to a few days in October and December and pursuant to my 2018 Executive Order not permitted on state lands, will be the last bear hunt under my administration. I'm grateful to the Fish and Game Council for their commitment to working with the DEP to address this issue and to chart a better way forward.

And finally, one more gearshift before we get to the numbers. A quick reminder that the new voter registration deadline is Tuesday, October 13th. That's one week from tomorrow, and we encourage those who still need to register to vote to use our secure online form accessible at elections.nj.gov. That's elections.nj.gov and clicking the link for the 2020 NJ Voter Information portal at the top of the page. Again, that's the 2020 NJ Voter Information portal at the top of the page. Mahen, we don't have it today but on Thursday, let's tell folks how many folks have already registered online since we started allowing that.

With that, Judy, let's look at the overnight numbers. We're reporting an additional 522 positive test results, giving us a statewide cumulative total of 208,713 since our first positive case was confirmed on March 4th. While this virus clearly remains a threat statewide, we continue to keep our eye on key counties and localities where there are current outbreaks and elevated numbers. We remain concerned with Ocean and Monmouth

counties in particular, which account for 167 of the newly reported cases today. That's roughly one-third of all new reported cases. Ocean County reported 119 additional of which, by the way, 86 are from the community in Lakewood. Monmouth County reports an additional 48 cases.

The statewide positivity for all tests recorded on October 1st was 2.62%. That was last Thursday, by the way. The statewide rate of transmission is currently – a little different format today, I'm not sure why. But if you can't read that, it's 1.27, which is higher than we would like. And again, I encourage everyone to download the new COVID Alert NJ exposure notification app, which is available for download through both the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. The more phones that have the app, the better we can fight this pandemic everywhere across our state.

In our hospitals as of last night's report, there were 320 known COVID patients, 187 patients listed as persons under investigation pending the return of their test results. That's a number of 507. And Judy, that is the third day in the past five that we've been over 500. That's something obviously we're watching very closely. Of those, 102 were in intensive care, 34 were on a ventilator.

Today, with a heavy heart, we're reporting two additional fatalities, bringing the total of confirmed deaths to 14,351. These deaths, both of them, occurred on September 26th and 27th respectively. The number of probable deaths remains at 1,787. Again, at the risk of comparing apples to oranges, there were nine deaths reported in our hospitals yesterday. However, as these are not lab confirmed, they are not included in that count.

As we do every day. Let's take a couple of minutes to remember three more of the residents who have passed away because of complications of COVID-19. Today we remember a couple. They are Dr. Barry and Sharon Sakowitz. They were both New Yorkers by birth and New Jerseyans by choice. They lived for many years in Woodcliff Lake before moving to Hillsdale, where they would spend their final years together. They died four days apart. In fact, Barry passed on the day of Sharon's funeral. You can't make that up.

Sharon, Judy, was a career nurse, holding nursing degrees from Adelphi University, not far from her native Queens, as well as from the University of California San Francisco Medical Center. And later she would be a nursing director at the Eastwood College Hohokam School, where she taught anatomy and physiology and played a key role in curriculum development, including the launch of the school's sonogram program. Away from the hospital and the classroom, Sharon was a leader in her congregation at Temple Emanuel of the Pascack Valley, and when her children were in school, she also helped lead the Woodcliff Lake PTA. She was a member of book clubs and needlepoint groups, and never turned down a game of Mahjong.

Dr. Barry, her husband, specialized in internal and pulmonary medicine and practiced alongside his brother, Dr. Arthur Sakowitz, right up until COVID-19 prevented him from seeing his patients. The brothers helped to establish the respiratory therapy department at the Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, with which they enjoyed a more than three decades long affiliation. Before Barry received his MD, he had earned bachelor's and master's degree in electrical engineering, he took enjoyment in fishing, playing bridge and chess, cheering for the New York Giants and taking his grandchildren to the Rockland Bakery for a few special treats. Barry and Sharon both cherished every moment spent with family, especially their family trips to Maine, and time with their friends.

They leave behind their children. Jo Ellen Sakowitz Kline, Dr. Noreen Sakowitz Cohen, I had the honor of speaking to Noreen, who by the way is also married to an emergency room doctor, and Randy Sakowitz and their spouses, along with their four grandchildren. Jason, Dylan, Sammy and Haley. Barry was 75 years old. Sharon was 74. May both of their memories be blessings.

Next, we celebrate the life of James Hemler, second from the left. He was 72 years old. He went by Jim, though a chosen few could call him, Pat, Jimbo. Jim was a native of Pennsylvania and life brought him to New Jersey and he lived in Matawan and Middletown, where we live, before settling in the Wayside section of Ocean Township 40 years ago. Jim was an engineer by education and training, holding degrees from both Notre Dame and Columbia and he worked at both Lucent Technologies and Fort Monmouth. Since his move to Ocean Township, Jim had been an active parishioner of the Church of St. Anselm. He took tremendous joy in family visits, vacations and celebrations and equally enjoyed getting together with close friends for dinners, card games, rounds of golf, and pizza parties on the beach. And it should go without saying, he never passed up a chance to watch the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame play football.

Jim leaves behind his wife of 47 years right there in the middle, Nina, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Friday and their children, son Joseph, who's also a Notre Dame grad, and daughters, Katherine and Allison and they're respectively in New Jersey and Brooklyn, and their families, including his beloved grandchildren, Hudson, Emma Braden, Addison, Ivy and Hazel. He's also survived by his brother Charles, several sisters-in-law and 15 nieces and nephews. May God bless and watch over Jim and his family.

So the Sakowitz and the Hemler families are just two among the many thousands who know all too well the ultimate cost of this pandemic. Yes, we are thankful that the numbers of those we're losing to this virus are much lower than before, but we cannot consider our jobs done until that number hits zero and stays there.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: 94 new cases reported over the weekend, 353 were from Ocean County. The majority of the cases are in the 30 to 49-year-old age group, followed by the 18 to 29-year-old age group. Today there are 119 cases from Ocean County; 86 of those cases were in Lakewood.

As of September 30th, the positivity rate in Ocean County was 7.2%. The Lakewood positivity is down from 28% to 19.51%. We have increased testing sites in Lakewood. Today, testing is available at the Blue Claws Stadium from 9:00 to 4:00; today and tomorrow testing is available at the Lakewood municipal lot from 9:00 to 3:00; tomorrow

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: – positive patients or persons under investigation. The breakdown of race and ethnicity of these cases is White 17%, Black 35%, Hispanic 39%, Asian 6%, other 4%. The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. In terms of deaths, the breakdown of deaths by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54.1%, Black 18.2%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.5% and other 1.9%.

At the state veterans homes, the numbers remain the same, and at our psychiatric hospitals, one new case has been identified. A patient at Greystone Hospital has tested positive. That leaves a total of 215 cases total in Greystone Hospital.

The Daily percent positivity as of October 1st in New Jersey is 2.62%, the Northern part of the state 2.18, Central 3.30, and the Southern part of the state 2.56. That concludes my daily update. Stay safe. Remember, for each other, for us all, please take the call and download the COVID Alert NJ app. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you for everything, including again, I repeat for the umpteenth time, for reminding us of the stark disparities and inequalities across racial lines that this virus has laid bare. Thank you for all. With that, Pat, over to you. Hope you're well. Thank you for your leadership. Compliance, how are we doing on the West Coast, and any other matters?

Superintendent of the State Police Col. Pat Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Over the weekend, there were two Executive Order compliance summonses issued, one at Cuban Pete's in Montclair for being well in excess of the capacity limit; as well as in Gutenberg, where officers responded to restaurant Cosmos 2000 where again, capacity was far exceeded.

With regard to our DEP forest fire service, they are still out there in California. We are working with the California Office of Emergency Management to see if they are going to extend that deployment. So whether that means that team stays or we swap out a new one, we'll probably have that ironed out within the next day or so, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, this is the second team, right? This is still the second?

Superintendent of the State Police Col. Pat Callahan: That's correct, right.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that and for all. We'll start over here with Elise. Before we do, a couple of things. We're going to at least experiment this week by shifting our schedule a little bit. We're going to go to a Monday, Thursday two a week schedule, subject to obviously the events that are around us, which feel like they're getting more intense as opposed to less. Assume, unless you hear otherwise, that we'll be back in here on Thursday at one o'clock. We'll be virtually with you the next couple of days. Again, we're going to try it this week. We reserve the right, I hope you'll bear with us, to shift to a different schedule if events warrant that.

I don't know how many on the road daily events we will do going forward, but I thought our trip, I defer to my colleagues here, I thought our trip Friday to Ocean County was very productive. We had leadership, health from the county, law enforcement, health, elected officials, faith leaders, education leaders. I thought it was a good visit. Again, can't say this enough, hats off to everybody. Everybody checked their partisan affiliations and beliefs at the door. Nothing but the facts, nothing but focusing on what we need to do together to get our arms around it and that's something we may want to try again at some point. Ocean County remains a high priority, as Judy went through the math in Lakewood, but not just Lakewood. As we mentioned, at least Jackson among other townships you highlighted on Friday were also having elevated case numbers. We will continue to keep an eye on that, as we do around the state.

I also want to belatedly welcome Jared Maples, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. With that, Elise, good afternoon. By the way, if you all could be economical, that would be a huge treat for us because there are a lot of folks here today. Thank you.

Q&A Session

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. Two questions. Governor Cuomo is shutting schools in New York City hotspots. Have you set parameters for doing the same in Lakewood?

And with regards to the Bedminster contact tracing, this morning you said you need more from the federal side. What did you mean by that? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Elise. Judy, you should come in behind me on either of these. But we reserve the right to take similar steps as Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio are taking. I think the word I've been using over the past number of days is a scalpel as opposed to a blunt instrument. As we've seen these, and Judy, you should disagree, or Tina, if you see it otherwise. We report, for instance, today an aggregate spot positivity for the state of 2.62%. But as Judy reported in her report, you've got numbers that are in the teens in some places. If you look at the reports by county, a blunt, statewide instrument looks less required at the moment as opposed to a scalpel, a whatever it is; a school district, a set of non-essential businesses, etc. Those options remain on the table.

I would just say in addition to being, you know, calling the trip in the face of facts reckless, I said, bordering on reckless, I've graduated the trip to reckless on Thursday. We just haven't had the level, as robust a partnership as we want. The lead has clearly been New Jersey on this, even for folks who are not from New Jersey, I might add. And I don't mean the staff members, the 19 folks that I refer to are clearly all Jersey folks, and that's Somerset County and Bedminster are taking the lead with Judy's team, and Tina. But the list of attendees of the 206 was a national list with a good chunk and dose of New Jersey folks, but folks elsewhere. It's at a moment like that you need as robust a federal response as we have had at the state level.

So there's been a response. We got the list. I think we got it at 2:30 on Friday. Does that sound about right? About 2:30 in the afternoon. Just, we need more. We need more. We needed that trip not to happen, number one; and number two, we need more. I can't say enough good things about Judy's leadership as well as the Somerset County and Bedminster leadership. Let's go around the horn over there, Nikita.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Hi, Governor. I want to ask first, with the election about a month away now, there's still not any info on how Perth Amboy is handling their run off. When do you expect to tell them? And then at this point, have you read, skimmed, been briefed on or otherwise been informed on the contents of the report that the State Commission on Investigation released last week that said that your administration was aware of nepotistic hiring practices at the SDA?

Are you aware of a post office issue in West Orange in North Arlington, where some batches of mail were dumped in the dumpster? Have you discussed it with USPS?

For the Commissioner, is there any concerns about mail that has literally been in the trash being forwarded to recipients?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, that's certainly a diverse set of questions. I've got no news on Perth Amboy. Matt Platkin is with us, any news there? So nothing to update you on that. On the SDA report, I had been briefed on the report and though I do not agree with all of their conclusions, I look forward to working with all the parties to continue to improve the SDA. At the risk of beating the same drum as I've beaten with Dustin a couple of times, I think Manny de Silva has done a terrific job over the past year and he and the board and their employees have made great progress.

I'm not aware of the West Orange or North Arlington reality, but Matt Platkin is going to come in and tell us his viewpoint.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, we were notified by USPS over the weekend. It's a matter of it's under investigation. But as you noted, Nikita, the mail was recovered from the trash receptacle and has been put back in the mail stream.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, I'm not sure how to answer the last question. I've never been asked this question before. To the best of my knowledge, I've never received – I've received a lot of trash mail, but I'm not sure I've received mail that's been in the trash.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, if you do receive mail that's been in the trash, open it, but wash your hands before and after, and dispose of the outer envelope appropriately.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't think I'm breaking any new ground, but at the Murphy household, whoever opens the mail, no matter where the mail has been, automatically when they finish washes their hands with soap and water. I would double underscore that advice.

Let's come down to Brent and then we'll go to Dustin, if we could, right here. Thank you.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Hi. You both had confusing things there. Should you or shouldn't you have a communal bowl for Halloween?

Governor Phil Murphy: You should not have a communal bowl.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Should not? Okay. Will Trump Bedminster be closed for cleaning? Because statistics show people of color are more likely to hold jobs as waiters and chefs there, what worries do you have for communities that may have been already disproportionately hurt by coronavirus by that event? How are you concerned about that after the Trump event?

How has the DMAVA and DOH cooperated with AG's investigation into veterans homes in Paramus and Menlo Park, and what has the administration learned about what went wrong at the veterans homes to result in such a significant amount of death there?

The DOL said the \$300 in unemployment benefits would be paid in October. Are there any updates on that?

And then I have one from Nancy Solomon of WNYZ. Rik Mehta said there was no need for him to quarantine after attending Trump's event and said you are fear mongering. Do you plan to take any action against attendees who don't quarantine?

Governor Phil Murphy: No communal bowls for Halloween, unless my colleagues to the right disagree. Yeah, I am concerned. I don't know the personal demographic profiles of the 19 staff members, but I am concerned, as we all should be. This never should have happened. Now that it has happened, everybody's got to self-quarantine and again, the testing window, you've got to let this incubate. I think the testing window, unless Judy or Tina disagree with me, would begin tomorrow.

We take every loss of life deadly seriously, and certainly of our blessed veterans. That investigation review process remains underway. But as I say every day, the first three numbers I look at are 62, 81, 3. Those are the losses of lives respectively confirmed, by the way, in Menlo Park, Paramus in Vineland. I've got nothing to update, unless Matt Platkin does, on the \$300 supplemental. We'll come back to Brent if Rob Angelo has an update on that.

I saw, I don't even know who Rik Mehta is, but I saw that he said that. I think literally, and I don't think this is the first statement that he's made that I would say this, but certainly this one qualifies. I think that statement should disqualify him from seeking public office. Dustin.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. It appears that the White House doesn't plan on tracing donors at Bedminster because they supposedly didn't spend more than 15 minutes within six feet of the President. Has the RNC or White House provided you with more than names and emails? Do you plan on more thoroughly tracing these individuals from New Jersey besides sending out an email? How many guests were from New Jersey? How many Bedminster staffers have you traced? Did they cooperate? What specific guidelines were allegedly violated at Bedminster?

To go back to beating that drum on the SDA, are there any specific conclusions of that report that you disagree with? Don't the new revelations about your office's communications with the agency lay blame for that scandal at your feet? Contrary to what attorneys you hired said which was that Delgado "must shoulder a majority of the blame for what ultimately occurred?" Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, you should come in on the – so we've gotten emails and successfully, I think, were able to connect on email with 184 of the 206, is that right? How many were in New Jersey? Do you have an exact number? About half, we think, but bear with us because that's not – we believe it's about half.

Staffers were all New Jersey. All 19 are New Jersey. I mean, Judy's been in touch with the CDC. We have been in touch since Friday morning with the White House. All of this remains a work in progress. Guidelines that were violated, as described to us, potential guidelines were too many people indoors. I don't think there was an outdoor guideline violated, to the best of our knowledge, but that's to the best of my knowledge. But there may well have been exceeding capacity inside. There's been some discussion that there was buffet-like food setups. Buffets are prohibited in our state. You can have food service, but you have to be at your place and it has to be brought to you. And again, I'm not saying that as a definitive matter as much as that's sort of on the list of what we have heard.

And again, I don't have anything more specific to say on SDA other than I've been briefed. I don't agree with all the conclusions and I think Manny's done a terrific job, and his team. Anything you want to add, either you or Tina, on the contact tracing front? You good with that? Okay, thank you. Sir, do you have anything?

Reporter: Yeah, two quick ones. Governor Murphy, do you consider the fundraising events in Bedminster to be a violation of your Executive Order on indoor gatherings? And can you clarify if initial outreach has been completed for all attendees and staff from the events in Bedminster, or if initial outreach has only been completed so far for New Jersey residents at the event?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think I've just answered the first one, to be determined, but based on the description of the indoor aspect of the event, potentially, in terms of violations. I think on that list would be potentially – again, I'm saying potentially, this is a matter for the Attorney General – more persons in the room than should have been in terms of capacity, food related. Let me just say this. The other thing is we're crystal clear on one thing which has to be said: if you've been exposed to someone who is COVID positive and it's a meaningful exposure, you have to quarantine. You have to take yourself off the field. The fact that it's being touted that the people at the indoor event were given a test and they all passed it or they wouldn't have been in there misses the point. As far as we know, they weren't the issue. The issue was the people that they were going into the room with, who had flown in.

The initial outreach has gone well beyond New Jersey and I mentioned it a minute ago, and I don't want to misstate the number: 184 of the 206 have been contacted, and all 19 either have been or will be contacted of the staff. The 184 includes a significant amount of non-New Jersey names. Clearly New Jersey's our top focus but we have done our part to reach out to people. And again, it was national in scale. Judy, I've heard Texas, Arizona, where else did you have?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Indiana, New York, Connecticut, Minnesota was on their own.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so not just New Jersey. Thank you for that.

Don Collins, WCBS TV: Good afternoon, Governor. My name is Don Collins from WCBS TV. Two quick ones for you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Always welcome back.

Don Collins, WCBS TV: All right, thank you. First one, with the number of cases that are coming out, with the uptick in cases, do you see a second wave coming? And if so, is the state prepared with PPE, ventilators, hospitals, are there enough rooms in hospitals?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not sure, Judy or Tina, whether you'd call this as more of the first wave or a second wave. I frankly, I'm not a medical expert, as if I have to tell you that. I don't spend a lot of time distinguishing between what wave it is as much as dealing with the facts that are before us. I'll defer to Judy and Tina.

Are we prepared? I think we are, but I tell you, the last thing we're going to do is spike any footballs. So whether it's bed capacity, PPE, ventilators, you know, we are building toward a 98-million piece strategic stockpile of ventilators. We're building toward 2,600 ventilators and we have in use at the moment 34, so I think we're prepared on that front. We've kept the bed capacity both in the hospitals as well as the field medical stations, even though they're no longer up. Testing, we are among the highest per capita testing capacity states in the country and we aim to keep it that way.

Any color you'd add, either of you? By the way, Tina, does it matter to an epidemiologist whether it's the first or the second wave, or you just call the facts as you see them?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Well, what we are concerned about is looking at the trends over time and who is actually impacted with COVID illness. So for example, as the Commissioner had mentioned, there's been a changing demographic of who's getting ill right now. At the beginning of the outbreak back in March we were concerned about older individuals, that's who was being hit in the long-term care facilities, individuals who are more vulnerable. Right now we're starting to see a lot more cases among younger individuals. And it's not just here in New Jersey, it's throughout the country and around our region. For that reason, that's actually going to be more important to take a look at, why are these groups getting impacted and how do we reach out to them, to ensure that they do the right thing? Social distancing, the masking, the whole nine yards.

Governor Phil Murphy: I reached out and Judy knows this, I reached out as I do regularly and I just happened to do a bunch of them toward the end of last week with five hospital CEOs. They're all seeing a modest increase in hospitalizations. Differing, as Tina has said, different demographic to some extent. They feel a lot more confident about their ability to treat it than they did six months ago. I think we've said that a fair amount here. Those are sort of the headlines that I took away. That was a smattering across the state. So that's Cooper all the way up to Holy Name and a couple of others in between. Thank you. You good, sir? Alex. Good afternoon.

Alex Napoliello, NJ.com: Good afternoon, Governor. A quick clarification for the Health Commissioner when you said 215 positive tests at Greystone, did you mean statewide? These are the psych hospitals? These are the human services positive cases? And is it since the pandemic began?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: It was for all psychiatric hospitals, the four psychiatric hospitals.

Alex Napoliello, NJ.com: Got it. And so sort of my broader questions for you guys, for Colonel Callahan, if there was some sort of EO violation issued to the President's Golf Club, what would it entail? Would there be a fine? Would there be a closure? Who would actually serve that? Would it be a trooper's name on that citation, perhaps even your name yourself?

For the Governor, I know, you said that the way you found out about the President's positive diagnosis for COVID was not an official from the White House. How did you find out? Did you receive a call from the Health Commissioner or was it on the news or the media or something like that?

And for Dr. Tan, I wonder if you could clarify for us, there's been a lot of confusion over when someone tests negative for COVID-19. It's sometimes seen as basically a clean bill of health. Can you explain a little bit more about how the tests and the virus work and how somebody can test negative but still be having the virus incubating inside? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think Pat and I – your question of how does it actually happen? That's a matter for the Attorney General and the Somerset County Prosecutor in this case, so we'll leave it to them unless there's anything you want to add to that. I wake up early in the morning, and I found out about a combination of press as well as emails from folks who had seen it through the night, including – we've lived around the world so I've got some friends in Asia who probably saw it before the rest of us. I did not hear it on an official channel.

We immediately, by the way, reached out to both family members and the White House staff to express our, on the one hand, our prayers and best wishes. And on the other hand, more of the business side that we need to be able to find quickly a way to work together on contact tracing.

I was talking to Pat about citations, Tina, I missed the question to you, but please take it away.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: So related to why, the timing of the test, when people get tests. Sometimes if you get tested very quickly after a possible exposure, you might not actually be able to pick up the fact that you have an infection. For example, with what we typically talk about for diagnostic testing, the molecular PCR testing, if you get tested the day after you were exposed to someone who is a COVID-19 case, you might not have built up enough virus to be able to be detected by the test.

The reason why we are concerned about when people test and the type of test is that it depends on the characteristics of the test itself. It also depends on the timing of when you might have been exposed and when you can actually get detected. That's why we recommend that in the event that you have had a close contact exposure, or if you're concerned about getting tested, to wait roughly about five to seven days after that exposure to get the diagnostic test.

Governor Phil Murphy: It's common sense, I guess, right? I mean, that's sort of the way a virus would incubate even if it weren't COVID, right?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: The other thing too is that we recognize that the incubation period is roughly 1 to 14 days but what we've been finding from a lot of the reports of COVID cases throughout the country as well as worldwide, the median time when you start seeing people turn positive is roughly around the five to seven-day window, which is why we're making that recommendation.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, thank you, Tina. Thank you, Alex. Catherine, is that you back there?

Reporter: Yeah. How are you doing?

Governor Phil Murphy: Well, I could barely see you, but I know it's you.

Reporter: So I know you don't want to talk specifically about the investigation at Bedminster but is there any way you could just talk a little bit about what an investigation into social distancing typically looks like? How long it could take and what kinds of penalties could we see?

And then to the Governor, you mentioned using a scalpel approach to new restrictions as opposed to a broad mandate, potentially. What might those restrictions look like? Have you spoken with local community leaders to that end?

And then, Governor, could you just clarify, have you received any more phone numbers or addresses for the attendees at Bedminster? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Catherine, just give me one more second on your first one. So, you know, we can't talk about the investigation, but I just want to make sure --

Reporter: I was just curious if you could just talk generally about what a typical investigation into social distancing could look like? Like, how long does it take? What kinds of penalties are issued? Just to give us a sense of what --

Governor Phil Murphy: You don't mean health, you mean enforcement? I assume, and Matt should weigh in here, as a general matter, you're going to look at whether or not any of our Executive Orders were violated. I mentioned two potentially. And again, it's to be determined. I'm not the Attorney General and that's

something, as Pat reminds me, him with the Somerset County prosecutor would be taking the lead, but two potential would be, how many people did you have in a room relative to the capacity of that room? And we're pretty clear that our indoor limits are the lesser of 25% or 150. That's one.

The other one that I use as an example would be, we're okay with indoor food service but we're not okay with buffets or you getting up to get your food. You have to be seated and the food has to come to you. That's, I think, for fairly obvious reasons. You don't want people milling around and crossing paths. Those are two areas, by example, as a general matter.

Anything we would do with a scalpel would be done and we're constantly in touch with local leadership. As I mentioned, on Friday in Ocean County, we had leadership not only at the county level, but at the community level in Lakewood. Both elected, faith, education at the community level. So whatever we would do, it would be done with the community or the county, and things would be looking at some of the things that we've opened, particularly inside, steps that we've taken and assessing jointly with the community leadership, whether or not we should reconsider some of those steps.

Do we have more information, phone numbers and addresses, etc.? I think it's sort of a mixed bag at the moment. Is that fair to say? So with staffing, I think we have what we need. I don't want to put words in your mouth. And it's a mixed bag as it relates to the attendees, including folks, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, there's a big chunk from New Jersey, but there's a big chunk from outside New Jersey. Dave, good afternoon.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. After President Trump tested positive for COVID, there was a lot of shock and people seem to be really jarred. Do you think it's refocused the whole COVID issue for us here in New Jersey? I personally noticed going shopping in a supermarket over the weekend, I did not see one person wearing the mask under the nose, which was actually working, and it felt a little different. What's your feeling about this? Is this perhaps the silver lining in this whole situation, that it would refocus us and remind us, even the President of the United States had to be rushed to the hospital, we could have a problem here.

I know you mentioned that the Attorney General's Office is looking into the possible violations of the Executive Orders in New Jersey. Have you spoken to the AG about this? Would you be confident that he's going to take appropriate action? Do we have any idea how long this could take?

And then final question on the bear hunt, could you talk a little bit about your philosophy about the necessity or not necessity for a bear hunt? I know you said the Fish and Game Council is going to take up a proposed amendment to change the state's game code. Why are you so sure about that? Have you directed them to do this? How does that work? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: All good questions. I think on your first question, and please God, everyone gets better here. We've reached out, as I said, to both family, to staff. I exchanged notes with Governor Christie on Saturday, my wife with his wife, and we've reached out to folks in his orbit. Please, God, everybody gets through this alive and well and healthy. There's no silver lining to a loss of life, there just isn't. So no matter how much it may have raised awareness, please God, let's get everyone, the President, the First Lady, everyone who's been infected.

But yeah, having said that, assuming everyone does, and I'm knocking on wood that they do, I hope people feel like – this guy – that's somebody who's in outer space. I think and pray that that's an exception. I think anybody who's reasonable, anybody who accepts just any amount of, we have to base any decisions on science and data and facts, the evidence is so overwhelming, what works on the one hand, it's basic stuff. And then on the other hand, what puts you at risk. Indoors, close proximity, no face covering with folks, if that weren't enough, with folks who are COVID positive, that to me is a bad cocktail, Judy and Tina, right?

Secondly, the AG, I haven't been in touch but that should not be of any significance or news because I respect, and we have since moment one, the independence of that office and it needs to be that way. I assume he's looking at the same facts that we're looking at. And again, some of this is to be determined, I'm not jumping to conclusions, even myself.

My philosophy has been, on the bear hunt, and Matt Platkin will give you a little bit more color in terms of the specifics on the council. My philosophy from day one is there has to be non-lethal ways to manage the issue. Other states have done it, states that look like us have done it. Connecticut hasn't had a bear hunt, I believe

this is right, since the 1840s. There's got to be a way to get at this to both protect public safety and to be humane. We believe after this year that we'll be able to achieve that balance. Matt, anything you want to add to that?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: The bear management plan that's currently in effect that sets the hunts runs through this year, so they have to issue a new rule, and the Commissioner with the council has already worked, as the Governor announced, to put out the proposal which came out today.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. You must be Gary, right? Gary, nice to see you.

Reporter: Thanks so much. So just to confirm these numbers, there's a lot of numbers thrown around, 184 people -- you emailed 184 people or they responded to your email?

Governor Phil Murphy: 184 emailed.

Reporter: So what are you guys doing about the 22 people that you did not email? That's one question. You know, you say every hour matters here. It's now been four days since the fundraiser, three days since you first got their emails. What level of cooperation and response have you gotten from those 184 people?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? Judy, you jump in here. One question, beyond the 184 is either more information on them, or information on the balance of the 22 people for whom that we were not given emails. And as I mentioned up front, we continue to need to see a more robust federal partnership here. We have aggressively taken the lead, under Judy's leadership. Somerset County has, Bedminster has, the local health authorities but we need more out of the feds.

Judy, you tell me if you see this differently. I'd say that the response and the level of cooperation has been a mixed bag for the 184 emails that have been sent. Would you agree with that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The purpose of the emails was to advise them as to what they should do. We are getting some responses back, some extremely positive, you know, thanking and would pass the word around. Some not so positive.

Governor Phil Murphy: Including, "How did you get my name?" The Republican National Committee, for anyone who's watching, is where we got your name. We need even more than we got from the Republican National Committee, right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The Somerset County Health Officer is spending a lot of time, first and foremost, following up on the employees. We know they're mostly from Somerset County and that's certainly the highest priority. The 184 have all been notified. The 22, at some point, if we need the CDC, we've been on the phone and they actually are standing by. If Dr. Tan calls them, they will be available to us for further follow up.

Governor Phil Murphy: That's a fair point, that last one. The CDC has said we're here, we need everybody in the federal government to put a little wind in their sails. And as I say, we need a more robust response. Mike, we're closing with you.

Reporter: Thank you. I think just one question. I wonder if you could say, well, you said that the federal government needs to do more here. Is the federal government doing anything here to help? Are they not doing anything? Can you be more specific about?

Governor Phil Murphy: I mean, the federal government, I'm using in broad strokes terms. We did get the list from the Republican National Committee on Friday, Friday afternoon. We've been on with the White House since early Friday morning, as I said, both on the you're in our prayers, we're here for you but we need your help. Judy just mentioned that Tina is on regularly with the CDC. Those are the national bodies that we have been most in regular contact with.

And again, we need to see more. I don't know how else to put it. We're doing literally everything we can and I'm proud of the efforts put forward by Judy and Somerset County and Bedminster. And again, I put a lot more strength in terms of where we would expect to see positive connections with the New Jersey side of this equation. The national piece is particularly where we need their help. Probably goes without saying. But

even in New Jersey, among the attendees, if you've got an email address, that email address, if that's all you've got, that doesn't tell you completely the information about where you may live or not. Again, we need to see more out of the federal side.

And again, I can't say this enough. We could speak out of both sides of our mouth, and I will. We wish everybody who's been infected, beginning with the President, the First Lady, Governor Christie, anyone else who's been infected, we wish them nothing but a speedy recovery, a full recovery. They're in our deepest thoughts and prayers. But as it relates to the event that took place on Thursday in New Jersey, with the knowledge that they had before they left for New Jersey, that there was exposure to a COVID-positive individual, that trip was completely unacceptable, completely reckless, and completely uncalled for.

We're having enough trouble dealing with what we're dealing with inside the four walls of Jersey, as we've been very clear and transparent about, in places like Ocean County. And higher education we haven't hit that hard today, Judy, but we've had Rowan, we have Rutgers, we've got Monmouth in my county. We already have challenges. We don't need folks coming in, knowingly exposed to a COVID-positive individual, and then be in the midst of a couple of hundred people in New Jersey. That's the last thing we need.

So with that, I'm going to mask up, speaking of giving the advice, Pat beat me to it. That's not the Halloween mask, it's that plus. Judy and Tina, as always. Thank you, Pat. Likewise, Jared, Matt, Mahen, the whole team. Again we will be virtual tomorrow and Wednesday unless otherwise noted.

I should say this. Someone who's been very helpful to us over the past seven months is in New Jersey, I believe, still tomorrow and that is to the best of our knowledge Dr. Birx will be here. And Judy, you and I will be with her in part. I think I'm going to be with her at the Rutgers piece, Pat will as well. She's been very helpful and she's got a particular focus on higher education. And as I mentioned a minute ago and Judy has spoken about several times, that continues to be a hotspot area for us.

So to everybody out there, please, thank you for everything you have done. I think, Dave, to your question, let's hope this is the silver lining, let's hope everybody gets well. The silver lining is we may have broadened, please God, that we've broadened the public acceptance of the basics that we have to adhere to: social distancing, face coverings, washing hands with soap and water, taking yourself off the field if you're symptomatic, if you test positive, if you've been around someone who tests positive. Those are the basics. That's all we've got right now. I hope we have a therapeutic sooner than later. I hope we have a vaccine that's efficacious, scalable, and safe sooner than later. I believe at some point we will. But until then, that's the hand that we have to play. Let's keep playing it. God bless you all.

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