

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: September 8th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Governor Phil Murphy holds a coronavirus briefing in Trenton o



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome back. With me to my right is the woman 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. The guy to my left who needs no introduction, Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. We have the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples with us.

Good afternoon. I hope everybody had a good and responsible weekend. The weather certainly was as good as it gets, as they say. With the return of limited indoor dining and limited capacity movie showings, among everything else, we had very few reported cases of knucklehead behavior. This gives us all some hope for the days ahead as we continue to battle this virus. For this, I thank all of you for your hard work, not just over this past weekend, but over these past six months.

As we continue getting back to more of our routines, whether it be dining out, heading to the gym or going to school, we cannot drop the new routines that we have started over the past six months, and which are the best means for us to protect public health and save lives. We have to keep wearing our masks and practicing social distancing. We need to keep up with the good hand hygiene and washing our hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, Judy, am I right? With soap and water and/or using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. These are the practices that have gotten us through the spring and summer. Let's keep them up these last days of summer push into autumn. We cannot let our guard down because this is a virus that spreads when we give it the opportunity to do so, so let's close off those opportunities together.



This week, the majority of our public school children will begin the new academic year. And as we've said many times before, it's not going to start like any we've ever seen. The Department of Education has continued its work to make sure that our districts, charter schools, and special service schools were all properly prepared for this week and I must give a huge shout out to so many, especially the Interim Commissioner of the Department of Education Kevin Dehmer, our executive county superintendents, the tremendous DOE team, the superintendents, administrators, educators, moms, dads, kids, other stakeholders for all of their hard work. As you can see as of this morning, 723 opening plans are complete, 86 have been returned for revision, and one is awaiting review. May I just say before we go on, the one district that's awaiting review is in fact one school. As far as I can tell, the overwhelming amount of back and forth on the 86 that had been returned for revision are technical in nature, some staffing, but technical in nature, as opposed to some big philosophical divide of which I'm not aware of at this moment. There could be, but I'm not aware of any.

And as I mentioned Friday, when plans are returned to districts for revision, the department keeps open active lines of communication to ensure that these plans end up where they need to be. So of the plans as you can see that have been finalized, 388 schools are reopening with hybrid in-person and remote learning, 69 with all in-person learning, 238 are all-remote until a certain date, and 28 are some combination of all of the above throughout their facilities.

We have all of the public health protocols and procedures in place to safeguard our children, our educators and staff and their families, and again, when there is a case of coronavirus that arises in one of our schools -- and folks, there will be -- we have the procedures in place to guide district leaders and local health officials to mitigate that. I wish everyone a safe and healthy start to the new year. To our administrators, I thank you for your leadership throughout the summer. And as this new year begins, to our educators, I thank you for your commitment to your students, wherever and however they are learning. To our students and families, I wish you nothing but a good year full of learning, and good health.

Next, switching gears, I'm proud to announce that our new online voter registration form is now fully up and running through the Division of Elections website. This online form is safe and secure and can be accessed anywhere, whether from a library computer or your smartphone. Simply visit [nj.gov/state/elections](https://nj.gov/state/elections) and click the link for Register to Vote at the top of the page. All you need to securely register to vote is your driver's license number or non-driver identification number or your social security number. During the soft launch period over the past week, nearly 13,000 voters safely registered online. And the voter registration deadline, just to remind everybody, is Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>.

From the Division of Elections page, you can also access and confirm your current voter registration information. And once your ballot is sent to you later this month, you'll also be able to set up a secure account to track when it is received by your county clerk. Again, that page is [nj.gov/state/elections](https://nj.gov/state/elections). And that last point I made, we probably don't make enough, Mahen, and I think we should land on this at some point in the next week or so as folks begin to focus more intently on the elections. And again, I want to repeat what I just said. Once your ballot is sent to you later this month, you'll also be able to set up a secure account to track when it is received by your county clerk, because that's a question we get all the time. How do I know my vote gets there? How do I know my ballot gets there? How do I know it'll be counted? Turns out you can know that.

So let's switch gears. Next up is the list of states from which travelers to New Jersey are being advised to observe a 14-day self-quarantine period, and that list has been updated. Delaware, Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia have been added to the list. Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands have been removed. There are now 35 states and territories that have over a seven-day rolling average, Judy, either more than 10 new cases of coronavirus per 100,000 residents, or a daily positivity greater than 10%. So visit, it's in the fine print at the bottom, [covid19.nj.gov/travel](https://covid19.nj.gov/travel) for the complete list of states and to learn whether you should be self-quarantining. If you are arriving from one of these states, use your smartphone to fill out the Department of Health's travel survey, which is available through the same page. We continue to ask everyone to practice self-responsibility and good citizenship by complying with our travel advisories, and this goes equally, whether you are a visitor to New Jersey or a New Jersey resident returning back home to New Jersey.

With that, if we may Judy, let's look at the overnight numbers. Today we are reporting an additional 284 positive test results for a cumulative total of 194,667. The daily spot positivity for tests taken on September 4<sup>th</sup> was 1.83%. That's a good thing, meaning that over 98% of the folks who got tested on that day came back negative. Statewide rate of transmission is 1.1. That's crept up, Judy, over the past number of days slowly, but up a bit, and I know you believe and Tina and the experts believe that part of the contributing factor there are the big numbers of tests and positive test numbers that we had sort of 5 to 15 days ago, so we'll watch that.

In our hospitals as of last night, there were 227 COVID positive patients being treated, another 192 persons under investigation awaiting their test results, total tally of 419. Of these, 82 were in intensive care, 33 ventilators were in use. And today, with a heavy heart, we are reporting an additional five deaths that have been confirmed to be from COVID-19-related complications, bringing the statewide total to 14,213 confirmed deaths.

Having said that, Judy, you made the point on our call earlier, all five of these deaths occurred at least or more than at least two months ago. These are from what feels probably like a lifetime ago. Sadly, they are all passed and that's the most important thing. The number of probable deaths remains at 1,783. At the risk of comparing apples to oranges, as we do now every day, in our hospitals yesterday there were five reported deaths. Again, they are not part of these lab-confirmed numbers that we're showing you on the screen. That's to give you an up-to-the-minute spot sense.

If we can, let's take a few minutes as we do every day to remember a few of the blessed souls we have lost from our great New Jersey family. We begin today by remembering Robert "Bob" Moir of Riverdale. Bob was 91 years old. He was born and raised in New Rochelle, New York, where Mahen will be married. Joined the Marines after high school and served in World War II earning, among other decorations, the National Defense Service Medal and the good Conduct Medal, and eventually attaining the rank of corporal. Even after his discharge from the Marines he wasn't done serving and promptly, Pat, enlisted in the United States Air Force and earned the rank of Staff Sergeant. With his military days over, he returned home to begin a second career in logistics, working for American Cyanamid in New York City.

He married and had two children, and even though that marriage eventually ended in divorce, he remained on good terms with his ex-wife, and continued to be a good father to their children. He moved to Riverdale in 1983 with the woman he called the love of his life, Blanche, and retired from American Cyanamid three years later. That gave Bob and Blanche plenty of time to travel together and to see the world. And back home, it meant more time in his workshop, as he was an accomplished woodworker.

He leaves Blanche and his daughter Kate who lives in Rhode Island, and with whom I had the great honor of speaking at the end of the week. Sadly, his son Bobby passed away nearly two years ago. He also leaves four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews. He's also survived by Blanche's sons Greg, Tim and Jeff and their families. We thank Bob for his years of service to his nation. May God bless and watch over him and his family.

Next we recall Joan Cargill. Joan was 81 years old. Joan looks like she could have been a Hollywood star there. Joan was born and raised in Jersey City and a graduate of St. Anthony's High School there. For many years, Joan was an executive secretary with Equitable Life Insurance in New York City, and then a secretary for the Union County Probation Department in Elizabeth, commuting to each from home in Roselle, which she kept for more than 50 years before moving in with one of her sons in South Plainfield, and eventually to her final residence in nearby Somerset. Joan was a devoted member and communicant of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Roselle, and a lover of, in order, art, music and animals.

She leaves behind her two sons Brian, and I had the great honor of speaking with Brian at the end of the week. He's a retired policeman, Pat, 30 years on the service in Roselle, and Brian's wife Mary and her son Thomas, along with her three grandchildren Alexis, Sarah and Thomas. She's also survived by her brother William. We offer our condolences to each of them and we honor Joan's memory and legacy. May God bless her.

Finally, today, we celebrate the life of 95-year-old Gisella Rippel. She lived in Aberdeen and was known by many simply as Ella. Ella was born, raised and educated in the Bronx and met the love of her life Nat when they were both high school students. They married in December of 1944, a marriage that would last for 49 years before Nat's passing. After a stint on Long Island, Nat and Ella settled in Aberdeen in 1962 and Ella

never left. She worked as a legal secretary for various attorneys, but her true legacy was in her community involvement, as the den mother for her son's Scout Troops, as a 25-year volunteer for Meals on Wheels, and for the many donations she made to numerous local organizations. Everyone knew they could count on Ella.

Ella was also a talented writer who authored any number of short stories, but her favorite pastime was simply being with her beloved family and friends. She leaves so many behind. Ella is survived by her daughter Sherry and son-in-law Barry, four grandchildren, Christopher, Natalia, Adriana and Nicole. I had the great honor of speaking with Nicole at the end of the week, and she's survived by great-grandchildren Grace and Milo. We thank Ella for her years of community service. May God bless and watch over her.

And as we come out of the long Labor Day weekend and begin to get back to work and back to school, let's remember how many of our fellow New Jerseyans have paid the ultimate price to this virus. So Bob and Joan and Ella could easily be any one of our parents or grandparents. It's all the more reason why we must continue to be vigilant and why we must keep up with our social distancing, wearing our masks and taking every precaution we can to save every single life we possibly can.

Finally, today, let's switch gears and meet another of the small business leaders who we will rely upon to make our economy stronger in the days to come, and with whom the New Jersey Economic Development Authority has recently partnered to see that made possible. Badri Nittoor, who I had the great honor of speaking with on Friday, is the CEO of Cherry Hill based Tripod Technologies, one of the early-stage technology companies that proudly calls New Jersey home.

Tripod's flagship eureka platform enables companies, largely in the fast-changing retail sector, to more efficiently work across the digital space using both artificial intelligence and machine learning to vastly improve end-user experience and overall quality. You should check them out. Their website is [sayeureqa.com](http://sayeureqa.com).

When the pandemic hit, hurting the businesses that Tripod in turn relies upon for its own future, it had a trickle-down impact. And while Tripod's investors were supportive of Badri and his vision, the future looked uncertain. So Badri looked to the EDA's Entrepreneur Support Program, and was able to receive a \$120,000 capital guarantee, giving Tripod's investors confidence to make, in turn, a total of \$150,000 in new capital investments. I had the great honor of speaking with Badri at the end of the week. He is now able to look to a brighter future, a future he is building right here in New Jersey. So to you Badri, thank you for being just one more reason why I remain, we remain, so optimistic about our future.

And I have a million more reasons. The millions of you who continue to work hard every day to help us beat back this virus. We have come such a long way together so far. First, our goal was to have our beaches open for the summer. And now with Labor Day behind us, we're looking forward with more and more of our economy getting reopened, at least in part. We have so much more to do, we all know that, but we can't get there unless we keep pulling together. So let's keep at it, folks.

And with that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. Well, today is the first day of school for many of our youth around the state. Some students will be learning from home, some will be attending in person, but regardless, it will be different than any other first day of school. I want to thank New Jersey schools for their work to protect the health and safety of their students and their staff.

Schools that are opening are putting into place policies that will help them prevent and respond to potential cases of COVID-19. To amplify the department's guidance, schools, working with their local health departments, are educating staff, students and families about when they should stay home and when they can return to school. They're implementing protocols requiring staff and students to stay home when sick, or if they have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, to stay home for the past 14 days, implementing a policy for daily symptom screening for students and staff, and reporting of symptoms that developed during the day, and identifying rapid testing resources when staff and students develop COVID-19 symptoms.

Schools should also be cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, ensuring adequate hand hygiene, ensuring adequate supplies, implementing physical distancing measures such as reducing occupancy in the school rooms, installing of partitions and physical barriers, requiring face coverings be worn, and limiting the use of shared supplies and equipment. If a child becomes sick at school and the illness is suspected to be COVID-19 related, the child should be isolated immediately and sent home as soon as possible, and referred to a healthcare provider for evaluation on whether testing is needed.

We continue to have concern for the spread of disease among college students. All campuses should have the capacity to isolate and quarantine students who show symptoms or who test positive. Additionally, they should be adhering to the guidance put forth by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education's Restart Standards for all New Jersey institutions of higher education. The standards state that institutes of higher ed must create policies and procedures that include use of face coverings for faculty, staff, students and visitors, except when doing so would inhibit the individual's health; frequent cleaning and sanitization of classrooms, residents restrooms, high touch areas, equipment and shared services; maintenance of adequate supplies such as personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies; continued remote instruction for faculty and/or students who are unable to participate in in-person instruction; social distancing in classrooms, residence halls, restrooms, and other areas across campus; limitations on the number of students who may return to residence halls and restricted access to residential common areas; designation of spaces for separation of individuals residing on campus who display symptoms consistent with or have a positive diagnosis of COVID-19; and a plan for on-campus transportation, which should include protocols for transporting sick students residing on campus to essential appointments as needed. In addition, institutions are responsible for establishing screening and testing protocols on their campus for employees and students.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 419 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients, and there are 82 individuals in critical care with 40% of those in critical care on ventilators.

Thankfully, there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are currently 57 cases total in the state. The ages of the children affected range from 1 year to 18.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is follows: White 54.1%, Black 18.3%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.5% and other 1.8%. At the state veterans homes we are reporting one new positive COVID-19 case. The resident is isolated and remains asymptomatic. At our state psychiatric hospitals the numbers remain the same.

The daily percent positivity as of September 4<sup>th</sup> in New Jersey is 1.83%. The North reports 1.49%, Central part of the state 1.57%, and the Southern part of the state 3.15%. The state continues to have robust testing capacity and over the weekend, the number of tests conducted in New Jersey has exceeded 3 million. That concludes my daily report. Stay safe and remember, for each other and for us all, please take the call. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, thank you for the thorough back-to-school report as well as your daily report. Mahen, is our live feed still down? Coming back up, okay. Should we continue? We lost our live stream. I don't think it was anything either you said or I said, but at some point we lost it. Maybe Pat will bail us out and get us back up. So compliance over the weekend, Pat, would love to get your assessment. I certainly didn't hear of any huge problem, but that's anecdotal. And more importantly, we lost a couple of policemen over the past week, one on duty and one off duty, and we mourn their loss with a very heavy heart. So with that, over to you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. To your point with regard to compliance, we had zero incidents reported to the ROIC over the weekend. I know that the weather was phenomenal, and although the beaches were crowded, you know aside, I know we did have that unfortunate stabbing down in Point Pleasant too, which Ocean County Prosecutor's Office certainly has two subjects in custody for that.

And to your point about the loss to our law enforcement family, we lost Patrolman Nick Shimanovich of Lakewood Police Department. His family is all about service. His dad, Rob's a lieutenant in Lakewood, his mom Jeanette's a sergeant in Lakewood. They've dedicated their lives to serving that community down there, and his tragic loss in that off-duty motorcycle accident. And Bridgeton Police Department lost Officer Shawn

Peak after an on-duty incident, which subsequently we think may have led to a cardiac issue. He leaves his wife Megan and young daughter Kate behind. We hold them all up in our prayers, Gov, and we'll see them through this as the day's move forward. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** God bless them. Thank you, Pat. On duty or off duty, they still passed and they've left us, so their memories are in our prayers and their families and loved ones are in our prayers. Mahen tells me, with that, the live feed is as predicted with Pat Callahan's presence, we're back up and running, Judy.

We'll start over here but before we do, Matt, it's your birthday. Matt Stanichi turns 21 today, Matt, congratulations. That's not true, but it sounds good. Before we jump in with your namesake, Matt Arco, we're going to be – Mahen, I lost you. We're going to be remote the next couple of days unless you hear otherwise, although we may have some events that will be out and about the state, and then we'll be together Friday. I believe, given it is 9/11, we'll be still together but we'll be a little bit later. I think it's going to be at two o'clock. I'll be in New York City in the morning and will be moving around the state at least to one other stop that day. It's hard to believe it's going to be the 19th anniversary of that awful attack on America. Again, if any of that changes, we'll be back to you. With that, Matt Arco, good afternoon.

## Q&A Session

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Good afternoon. Governor, with the school year restarting you still have 86 school districts without approved plans. Are you still planning to allow these districts to open? Can you identify the one district that has not had its plan reviewed and why not?

What's your opinion, you spoke briefly about this on the radio this morning but now that you maybe had time to digest it, I'm curious what your opinion is of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority ban on displaying American flags from overpasses. If you disagree with it, will you push to have it reversed?

And two from NJTV. They're curious how strong compliance has been with the state's travel advisory. How many travelers from out of state have filled out the forms that you requested? Have they agreed to the 14-day quarantine? Have you heard of any issues?

And are you concerned about United Airlines plan to furlough 16,000 employees by the end of next month?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, you may want to weigh in on the third question. I think we're going to leave, on your first question on school districts and school plans, because that one district I mentioned in my remarks is actually one school, I think we're going to leave that out for the time being. I don't think there's a big cataclysmic philosophical debate on that, nor to the best of my knowledge on the 86 that are still going back and forth. I don't know of any plans unless my colleagues do, Matt Platkin has joined us, to keep schools from opening I think these are largely either technical or staffing issues that are being resolved, God willing, as we speak, if not already.

The Turnpike Authority was raised in an interview I did this morning. I didn't like what I heard. You know, we are the greatest nation on Earth even though we're far from perfect, and our flag represents that nation. After I got off the call, we spoke to the team and at least for the time being, the Turnpike Authority has suspended doing that until we find a good way forward. As I mentioned in the interview this morning, if there's some safety or distraction element from some other type of signage, which I suspect what this is, not our American flag but some other signage, I want to make sure that I'm not promulgating something that's unsafe. But I think we should be proud of our flag at every step, again, even though we have a long way to go to perfect our union. I stand with the flag. They've suspended that for the time being, until we can find a good way forward.

I'm going to skip the travel advisory other than anecdotally, it feels like we can't find, Judy, unless you see otherwise, any evidence that some returning person or persons have lit up a flare up of some sort.

I'm very worried about the loss of jobs, if that's the question. These are significant. We've already lost over -- we have over 1.5 million people already who have claimed unemployment insurance for the first time. You start hearing 16,000. The unfathomable comment that it could have been worse, which is true, but still, that's deeply concerning. The travel business, my guess is, doesn't get back on its feet globally, never mind in New Jersey, for many years to come, so that's another mountain we're going to have to climb together.

Judy, any sense of compliance on the travel advisory? If not, we can get back to Matt in terms of numbers or any other observations.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We've had no major outbreaks either from the travel advisory. We did, through really good case investigation and contact tracing, identify an individual who had been to the Sturgis gathering, and it was the contact tracer who really nailed the questions and got the answers. I just wanted to call that out. It just shows the value. The person went into quarantine and there's no outbreak.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's great. We can come to you, Mahen, just if there's a specific number of folks who have filled out that advisory, and we can come back at a later point. I've been to that Sturgis Rally, by the way, about 12 or 14 years ago. That is something. Matt, thank you. Alex, over to you.

**Alex Napoliello, NJ.com:** Well, now I've got to ask about you at Sturgis because that's a mental picture that I don't quite can assemble in my head, but --

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I wasn't on a motorcycle. It was a coincidence.

**Alex Napoliello, NJ.com:** Good afternoon, Governor, thank you. Just some clarifications for the Health Commissioner. First, can you tell us which veterans home this person was at? And if they were asymptomatic, how was their illness detected? Was there sort of a regular test that went on?

Two questions for the Governor. First, Governor, at this moment, the State Senate Budget Committee is meeting to start to discuss your budget. I know that you said either last week or the week before that the \$4.9 billion pension payment is non-negotiable. I'd like to ask you which one of your revenue increases are non-negotiable, whether it's the millionaire's tax, increase in gun fees, increase in cigarette taxes, or is there some wiggle room there?

And separately, I'd like to ask you, as these reopenings continue, whether it's indoor dining or movie theaters, how much of a rise do you expect in either cases or the statewide rate of transmission, because this is happening, and how much of a rise is acceptable to you?

And lastly, for Colonel Callahan, I'd like to ask you, you just mentioned that Officer Peak may have expired because of a cardiac issue that was connected to that rescue. Can you tell us exactly how that happened or why that happened? And can you comment as a member of law enforcement what it means to you, that Officer Peak was actually diving in to save a burglary suspect, a perpetrator who was wanted for a crime as opposed to somebody who just happened to fall into the water? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Bear with me one sec. Judy, do we say which veterans home?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, I'll have to get back to you on that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** We'll get back to you. Listen, any budget has an enormous amount of negotiation associated with it but there are certain pieces of it that have to be sacrosanct. You know, we have to make our bond payments, we have to pay interest, we have to pay principal, and I put pension payments in that same -- it's not literally legally the same category but in so many respects, I view it as a as a similar obligation.

But listen, this is a process that goes back and forth. I've said this before. This is not a little bit, it's a much shorter runway than normal but I've now been around this position long enough to be able to compare notes with how we do our budget versus other states. I think we do it really well. I'm going to meet with leadership later on today and just compare notes. We'll meet again, I think, later in the week, in a couple of days, so to be determined. But a lot of things are negotiable, some things just are not.

Judy or Tina, I mean, you should really -- you're more qualified to answer this, I think, in terms of how much risk we're willing to take. We know that when we've taken steps that we take on more risk, whether that was parks and golf early on or beaches or outdoor dining, or now indoor activities. And we also have said many times this virus ebbs and flows and undulates is a word that we've used. I think you heard Judy and I back

and forth earlier that the RT is somewhat informed by the amount of positive tests. And you look back, today we're 284. The past few days have been under 400 but five, six days ago, Judy, we were well over 450 a couple of days in a row. I'm not sure how would you assess the willingness in terms of risk profile? Tina.

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Well, you know, it's going to be hard to tell until we monitor trends for the next couple weeks because we just implemented the indoor dining and the entertainment allowances, so we need to wait about two weeks or so. But that said, you know, we do recognize that things are going to be done differently now. We know the types of precautions that we need to take. There are a lot of safeguards when we actually resumed indoor dining and some of these entertainment factors, but also we'd like to just take the opportunity to stress the importance of recognizing that we're now also entering flu season. This is a reminder and the time to start thinking about getting the flu vaccine. The flu vaccine will help prevent respiratory illness due to the flu virus, which will help us with looking at other respiratory virus activity that's going to be going on in this fall. This is the time, September/October, is the optimal time to that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Tina, I'm getting my flu shot Saturday morning. I don't want to come back in here on Monday and have you ask me if I've got my flu shot yet. The tragedy and Bridgeton, Pat, any more color on that?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** I think it would be premature. I would defer to the medical experts with regard to cause of death. But regardless of what he was doing in that river, whether it was chasing a suspect, whether somebody had fallen in, to law enforcement, there really is no difference. You raised your right hand and took an oath to protect people's lives and that's what he was doing and in doing so, made the ultimate sacrifice.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** God bless him and God rest his soul. Sir, do you have anything? No? We're going over to Dustin. Dustin, good afternoon.

**Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record:** Good afternoon. What's your reaction to the Legislature predicting that the state will have \$1.4 billion more than the Treasury Department predicted? Do you think that's within the realm of possibility? Could that have an impact on the dollar amount of your bonding plan or would you refuse to certify those revenues?

On schools, have there been any reported coronavirus cases and/or quarantines at schools? Will the administration be tracking outbreaks in school districts? And if so, whether that would be made public?

And what, if anything, is the administration doing to prepare for a possible vaccine as soon as November, as the Trump administration has said could happen? Do you share any misgivings of some public health officials that he's rushing out of vaccine before November 3<sup>rd</sup> to help his reelection? Thanks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. Listen, our Treasury team is, I think, looking at the OLS numbers, I think as we speak. I mentioned I've got a meeting later on today with leadership. I hope they're right. I will just say this, that this is a time you know, we pride ourselves in being prudent, reasonable in our projections. I'd probably on the margin rather be in an environment like the one we're in, which is unlike any. You know, as we always say, we have to remind everybody that this is a fiscal reality matched only by the Great Depression and the Civil War. So when you're in that sort of league, I just think we need to be very prudent. But the short answer is we're looking at their numbers.

I'm not aware of any outbreaks or quarantining, unless you all are, at schools as we sit here, are either of you? I hope it stays that way. But we should all expect that there will be, without question.

I'm not sure I'd use the word misgiving. But I was back and forth with senior executives who were preparing to, I suspect by now they've already put a letter out. Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer and Moderna were going to jointly put a statement out that they would err on the side of safety and the normal protocols associated with developing a vaccine. I went to two CEOs and one Executive Vice President saying, listen, that was really, you know, I took my hat off to them, the fact that they said that. We always knew that, these folks do it the right way, but I thought it was important that they did say that.

We just can't let politics play in here. I've got no evidence that it is, by the way. Early November is, based on the conversations we've had, I would be lying if I said that was not on the very aggressive side, based on the timeframes for either therapeutics or vaccines that we've had with the medical folks we talk to. I had sort of, you know, I think we had been led to believe sort of year end would be at least a wave to address vulnerable communities, frontline healthcare and other essential workers. If it beats it, I suspect we'll be among the happiest people.

And as we prepare for it, unless Judy or Tina want to add anything to this, I've got no insight specifically on preparation other than to say equity will matter. I think we said this last week, there's a hierarchy of sort of communities and populations that we have applied to our testing protocols. I would bet those would be similar hierarchies that we would for a vaccine as well. So again, hope for the best, prepare for the worst. I think that's going to guide us on that front as well. Thank you, Nikita.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Hi, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Good afternoon. Given that the all VBM races have tended to bump turnout in local elections, have you given any consideration to ask the Legislature to make municipal elections permanently held through all mail-in ballots?

Separately, some counties have new voting machines on order. If New Jersey continues to rely like it has on mail-in ballots, it seems like they maybe won't need as many of those machines. Do you recommend that those counties slow such purchases or even cancel them?

And you've talked a lot about Senator McConnell in recent weeks. I know that you've previously been a generous donor to Democratic campaigns. Do you have any plans to contribute to Amy McGrath's campaign against Senator McConnell? That's it.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Is that it? I've got no comment on giving to campaigns, including Amy McGrath, other than I think she's a great candidate. She's a rock star. I've had no conversations, Matt, unless you have, with folks regarding vote by mail for municipal elections, so there's nothing to add there.

I would say this, I don't have the specifics on the machines that are on order by county. Those are not cheap. Obviously, financial considerations are also a part of this. We're not in a forever and always moment here, please God, right? Dustin just asked about vaccines. I'll be thrilled if they're here by early November, but I won't be shocked if they're here, or therapeutics by a year from November. I say that because this is a window of time. I hope it's a short window that we're having to do things that we've never done before. But ultimately would I have some high degree of confidence that we'll get back to using machines to vote? Absolutely.

I personally have voted by mail over the years. I think it's an easy, straightforward way to cast your vote that adds to democracy. But that doesn't mean that we're past the days of machine vote. So without knowing the specifics of how many, how much, what the timing is, we're in a window here that I hope is shorter than longer. Anything you want to add to that? Okay.

So with that, thank you all. I'm going to mask up here. I want to thank Judy and Tina as always. Pat, thank you. Jared. Matt, Happy Birthday. You've got some Dunkin Munchkins back there. I will not join you, but I know you'd love everyone to go back and grab a Munchkin on the way out. Judy, that includes you and Tina and Pat. Matt Platkin, thank you. Mahen, again, we'll be virtually with you tomorrow and Thursday, in person at two o'clock on Friday unless you hear otherwise.

It's back to school. This is a big week. I mean, we said that we had a couple of back-to-back big weeks. Last week gyms, indoor dining, movie theaters this week. Some back to school last week, this week, big back to school and we're going to monitor this. This is not something that we're going to be able to come back to you tomorrow and tell you how, as a health matter, how things went today, necessarily. We need to monitor this stuff over time, as Tina said earlier. But folks, keep doing the right thing. You've been extraordinary. No state has done a better job and that's thanks to the millions of you out there. So thank you all and God bless you.

# Governor Phil Murphy

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