

## Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: November 5th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

11/5/2020



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone. Good to be back safely and responsibly, face to face again here. I'm joined by the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan. To my left, the guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. We're also joined by the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples.

Let's jump right in, we've got a number of different topics to hit. We had a truly historic Election Day on Tuesday, and I think a historic election season. When all is said and done and counted, we will see the highest number of votes cast in any election in our state's history. First and foremost, I thank every New Jerseyan who cast a ballot, whether you voted by mail or on Election Day. Regardless of who you voted for, our civic society, our governmental institutions, and our democratic system are based on the votes of the people, and the more people participate in this process, the stronger each becomes.

I also want to give a particular shout out and thanks to all the election workers from the boards of elections and county clerks offices to the local poll workers, members of the National Guard, and others who helped ensure a smooth Election Day and who continue to complete the counting of every ballot. Votes choose leaders, leaders don't choose votes. As I've said, we don't have a complete count yet, but we expect that when all is done, well over 4 million New Jerseyans will have made their voices heard.



Of course, it wasn't just the candidates for public office on the ballot, but also several important public questions. By the way, I should say Jared and I just chatted backstage and Pat I think will agree, very few glitches on Election Day and very few glitches, frankly, in the entire election season, and that's very gratifying. In addition to the persons who were on the ballot, we had several important public questions. One of those extended the constitutionally provided property tax deduction currently available to wartime veterans, extending that to all of our honorably discharged veterans. I was pleased to see that passed by a nearly four-to-one margin. I was on the phone Pat with a friend of ours, Joe Griffies, on Saturday and his Welcome Home Show. I said listen, when you're in the Armed Services, you don't make the decision about whether or not we're going to war or whether you're going to war. That gets made by other folks. You shouldn't have to pay a price for not being in a war. God bless you if you're a veteran, you deserve equal treatment. With that, we have solved that riddle.

Also, public question number one, the legalization of adult use marijuana which passed by more than a two-to-one margin, and with support, I might add, from across the political divides. I anticipate that some of you here today will have the question as to where we go from here, but let me state simply that for me and for so many others in our administration and across the state, this is a matter of social justice, racial justice, economic justice, and at the end of all that, flat out common sense. I am proud that New Jersey is now joining the other states which have similarly come to recognize that our outdated marijuana laws really ended up doing little more than sending predominantly black and brown, mostly young men, to jail and thereby limiting their potential and harming our communities and in some cases, changing their lives for the rest of their lives. I look forward to working with the Legislature to swiftly pass enabling legislation that will set up a regulatory framework for adult use marijuana.

And as a reminder, until we enact that enabling legislation, recreational marijuana remains illegal under our state law, as Attorney General Gurbir Grewal noted yesterday. Yet, as the Attorney General also noted, both prosecutors and law enforcement have very broad discretion to handle low level marijuana offenses.

Next up, it's a Thursday so earlier today, the Department of Labor in our state, at the federal level and around the country released the latest weekly unemployment numbers. Last week, roughly 24,700 workers submitted an initial claim for unemployment benefits. That's a decrease of more than 2,500 from the prior week, and the third consecutive week of decline. Tell that to one of the people who filed for unemployment insurance; that will give them a little solace. But still, overall 1.7 million New Jersey workers have filed a claim since March, and more than 1.46 million workers have met the monetary requirements to receive benefits. Boy, this is one huge glaring area and please God we don't wait until either this administration re-ups or a new federal administration comes in office. We need federal stimulus at many levels, especially for the folks who are unemployed. They deserve that continued bridge that worked so effectively in the spring into the summer that has been taken away from them.

All totaled more than \$18.4 billion has been released to our unemployed and underemployed workers. As always, I want to thank Commissioner Rob Asaro Angelo and his team for all they have done, and will continue to do, in helping our working families receive their benefits.

Also on the labor front, the Executive Order that I signed last week to provide mandatory health and safety standards to further protect all of New Jersey's workers during this pandemic takes effect today. In fact, it took effect I believe at 6:00 a.m. this morning. I encourage all workers and all employers to visit our main website, [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov) and look for the /safe page to learn more about the order and what it means. Additionally, that page is being updated today with a link to report a workplace which is not in compliance with the Executive Order and Mahan tells me that that is, in fact, up and running. That was part of the Executive Order. We promised a link that you could go to and fill out a complaint if your employer was not following the obligations that are very clearly laid out in this Executive Order, whether it's providing masks, six feet minimum social distancing, breaks to wash your hands with soap and water, etc.

Again, I want to thank everybody, the employers, the overwhelming amount of whom have been doing and continue to do the right thing and our brothers and sisters in labor, especially the Protect NJ Workers Coalition for their partnership. With that, Judy, I'm going to turn to the overnight numbers if it's okay with you.

We are reporting an additional 2,104 positive cases, bringing our cumulative total of cases since March 4<sup>th</sup> to 247,219. Bergen, Essex and Passaic counties are each reporting more than 200 cases today. Camden, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth and Union are each well over 100. Over the past three days since we last came together on Monday, although it was virtual, we have recorded, Judy, 6,408 cases in those three days. The positivity for all tests recorded on Sunday, November 1 – and as we said the other day, there's usually a little bit distortion up, down or otherwise on the weekends, but the positivity is unacceptable, 7.74%. By the way, you're seeing new temporal frames on our charts because we're very happy to go back and join with you in great pride at how we cracked the curve in the spring and into the summer, but these are now, from the first of August on, because that's really frankly right now the more appropriate timeframe for us to be looking at.

Today, statewide rate of transmission currently stands at 1.26. Mahen, is that also since August 1? It is, right? Okay. Looking at our schools, by the way, interesting story here. Our tracking dashboard has been updated, as we do every Thursday, to report all new cases which are confirmed to have been from the instances of in-school transmission over the prior week. This week, we're reporting 24 additional individuals who are cases stemming from eight newly confirmed instances of in-school transmission. This is a cumulative number, so this is not what's happening every week. That gives us on the left column a total of 36 cases of in-school transmission since school opened, that's now a couple of months, impacting 146 individuals. Just to give you a quick sense, I'll give you the high counties because it's hard to read this, five in-school transmissions in Bergen, six in Camden, four in Ocean.

*[Break in Audio]*

Next up, we recall – look at that handsome guy. Patterson's Randolph "Randy" Stewart. He was 67 years old, too young when COVID took him away from us. Born and raised in the Silk City, Randy was a trained water purification specialist who served with the 15th Armored Division of the New Jersey National Guard based out of Teaneck. He would later serve as an officer at the Passaic County Juvenile Detention Center, before becoming Sergeant of Security for Passaic County Probation and Child Support Services. Randy was known for the kindness he showed and was noted for providing coloring books and snacks for the children he served as they waited with their parents.

Randy leaves behind his daughter Bree who lives in Miami, with whom I had the great honor of speaking earlier this week, and Randy's fiancé, Elsa. He's also survived by his brothers Ozzie, Victor and Jerry and their families including 15 beloved nieces and nephews, and he leaves behind a great many friends. I would have said that he left behind his sister Olivia, but COVID took her in September. I believe next Monday we will be honoring Olivia here. We thank Randy for his service and may God bless him and watch over him and his family.

And finally, for today, we travel to Vineland in Cumberland County to remember the guy in the middle there, Frank Lorito. Born and raised in Vineland and a graduate of Vineland High, Frank served in the United States Navy during the Vietnam War. When he returned home he embarked on a career in construction, working as a project manager for several general contractors. In his retirement, Frank returned to the water as a credentialed merchant mariner and boat captain for Cape May's iconic Tiny Cruise Line. Frank was also a volunteer firefighter, serving with the North Vineland Fire Company No. 3 for 30 years and with the New Jersey Forest Fire Service for over five decades. He might have been one of the guys, if this had happened a couple of decades ago, Pat, that we sent out to California.

He lived his life by what became known as Franco's rules, which required him to spend time doing the things he loved, especially fishing, cooking, and entertaining his family and friends. Frank is survived by his daughters, Renee and Michelle, and I had the great honor of speaking with Michelle earlier in the week, and his son-in-law, Michelle's husband David, along with his two grandsons, Max and Henry. He also leaves his sister Loretta, nephew Thomas, niece Maria, and great-niece Gillian and numerous other cousins. A tremendous life indeed. We thank Frank for his service to our nation and his community and we know he is somewhere where Franco's rules are still the order of the day.

So Reuven, Randy and Frank are just three more among the more than 16,400 New Jerseyans we have lost today. For them and for all of our families, we must recommit to doing all that we can to slow the spread of this virus and to save every life we can. That's simple stuff, wear your mask, wash your hands frequently with

soap and water, social distance, take yourself off the field if you don't feel well or you've been exposed, use common sense. These are the things we need to do now just as much as we needed to do them last spring. They crushed the curve once and we can do it again, but only if we all make that commitment.

And by the way, common sense includes not traveling outside of New Jersey for the time being, unless you have to cross state lines for work or school, for worship or some other essential travel. As we know, and Judy and I have spoken to this many times, Thanksgiving is just three weeks away so I encourage everyone to follow the CDC's guidelines and plan for a smaller dinner with your immediate household family only. We do not want anyone's thanksgiving to lead to more cases of COVID-19. Remember, public health creates economic health. It happens in that order. For us to get to the stronger, fairer and more resilient New Jersey when this pandemic ends, we need to take action right now.

Speaking of economic health, I'd like to take a minute before I turn things over to Judy, to highlight another small business that has partnered with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to maintain their place in our community. This is, and we're going to bring them up now, Harshil Patel, owner of The Honest Restaurant in Edison, one of the five New Jersey locations for the family-owned Indian restaurant chain that started out as a food cart in the streets of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India. And literally you can't make this up, I was in that town a year ago last month.

To help cover expenses throughout the spring when the pandemic was at its height, Harshil worked with the EDA to secure an emergency grant to cover expenses, and today Harshil and his team continue to serve their loyal customers. Harshil came to the United States a decade ago, and is building his American Dream right here in New Jersey. I'm proud that our state is where so many come, and we wish him nothing but the very best going forward. By the way, swing by Honest Restaurant. I'll give you the address right now. Judy, Pat, you've got to stay for the rest of the presser, but 1681 Oak Tree Road in Edison. Check it out, it's fantastic food. That's where we'll leave things for today.

Again, thanks to everybody who made sure that your voice was heard on Tuesday or leading up to Tuesday, regardless of how you voted, or for whom you voted. The important thing is that we send a clear message that our democracy is stronger when everybody participates, and when every vote is counted. 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, along with the rest of the nation, cases of COVID-19 continue to increase in our state. The country reached an alarming milestone yesterday with more than 100,000 cases reported in one day, the highest since the epidemic began. Many states are also seeing record cases and severe strains in their hospital capacity. Top health leaders have cautioned that they expect the situation to get worse as the weather gets colder and more people gather inside. As I've said before, this virus has not taken a break and we cannot either. Pandemic fatigue is a real threat to containing COVID-19.

In New Jersey, we continue to use our hotspot teams to work with local health departments to reduce transmission. As you know, our hotspot teams have been working with local health officials in nine counties, including Atlantic, Bergen, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Union and four major cities including Atlantic City, Elizabeth, Lakewood, and Newark, and several universities including Rutgers University, Rowan University, and Monmouth University.

Our hotspot teams monitor the situational reports to examine trends and new cases, testing, and other disease progression metrics. When a county shows increases in these metrics, we collaborate with that county for further investigation. During this investigation, the team looks at several metrics and indicators to get a more focused picture. We look at percent positivity and number of people tested within each municipality. We review cases by age groups, gender, and race and ethnicity. We talk to the local health departments and get detailed information on the cases and outbreaks reported from schools, sports teams, long-term care facilities, businesses, colleges and universities, faith-based organizations and other settings.

Using this information, we identify potential sources of the hotspot geographically, industry, culturally or otherwise. Once we identify a specific hotspot, we coordinate enhanced activities and deploy any resources needed in four key areas: testing, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine, and health education and

community engagement. Last week, I outlined our efforts in Lakewood and progress in reducing the spread of COVID-19 there. We recently shifted our focus to the northeast part of the state, where several counties have emerged as new hotspots.

In Essex County, for example, we've identified Newark as a hotspot. Their current seven-day average case rate is 40 cases per hundred thousand, and their percent positivity is 12.3%, which is the highest rate in Essex County. Similar to Lakewood, we are working with the Newark Department of Health and city officials to deploy rapid test kits and pop-up testing sites to increase the contact tracing workforce, including recruitment of bilingual contact tracers. We're identifying isolation and quarantine facilities for persons who are experiencing homelessness, and individuals who are unable to isolate or quarantine at home. We're partnering with community groups and faith-based leaders to maximize testing among residents, and we're translating materials into Spanish and Portuguese.

As New Jersey is experiencing increasing community spread, we have to be steadfast in practicing our precautionary measures to protect our health and the health of others. Even when we are with our loved ones and friends, we need to mask up, social distance, wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizer to reduce the risk of transmission. While we are seeing cases related to activities such as sports or school or daycare and workplaces, the majority of our cases are not easily traced back to a single exposure, and are likely related to routine gatherings in places such as your homes.

As a state, we've been working together for more than eight months to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We have adapted to new protocols, and we've all adapted to new ways of life. We must continue to practice our preventive measures. Get tested if you've been exposed. Cooperate with the contact tracers, and please download the COVID New Jersey Alert app. These are the tools we have available to us to contain the virus. They're the only tools we have right now, and we need everyone to take these steps to keep our state safe.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals are reporting increasing hospitalizations with a census of 1,224 of COVID-positive patients and persons under investigation and 36%, 238 of those individuals are in critical care and 36% of those critical care patients are on ventilators. A short seven weeks ago, that number on a seven-day rolling average was 420. Today, it's 1,224.

There's one new report of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, so there are now 61 total cases in our state. The children affected have either tested positive for COVID-19 or have antibody tests that were positive, suspecting a COVID-19 exposure. In New Jersey, thankfully, there are no deaths reported at this time. The children are between the ages of 1 and 18. The breakdown of race and ethnicity is White 20%, Black 33%, Hispanic 36%, Asian 6% and other 6%.

The breakdown of our deaths by race and ethnicity overall are White 54.1%, Black 18.1, Hispanic 20.2, Asian 5.5, other 2%.

At the state veteran homes, there is one additional positive resident in the Paramus home who has tested positive. All appropriate infection prevention strategies are in place. At our state psychiatric hospitals, six new cases have been identified at Ancora Hospital, and again, all appropriate infection prevention strategies are in place.

As the Governor shared, we have one of the highest percent positivity we've experienced in quite some time in our state as of November 1<sup>st</sup> of 7.74%. The northern part of the state is 8.71%, the Central part of the state 7.32%, and the Southern part of the state 6.47%.

That concludes my daily report. As always, stay safe and remember for each other and for all of us, please take the call and download the COVID Alert NJ App. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, just to put a magnitude on this, seven weeks ago the number of hospitalizations versus today, today is three times, almost exactly. It's pretty clear what we're in the midst of here. Thank you for everything, as always. Thank you especially for pointing out the inequities across racial lines, especially. Can we assume, by the way, Judy, you or Tina, I haven't asked this in a long time, the number of child inflammatory syndrome cases is now up by one to 61, no fatalities, I'm knocking on wood as I always

do. The assumption I think I've got and I assume everyone has is that these kids have gotten better over time. That there are not 61 kids today who are sick, that this is a rolling – it rolls through these kids, is that fair to say?

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Every child has a different course. You know, we have to look at this as a very serious complication of COVID-19. Not everybody has an easy course and we can't just lump them and say everybody does great. If I can actually add that a similar phenomenon has been described among adults as well, so there's also the syndrome described in adults.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Well said. I just want to make sure folks, A, each kid deals with this differently, each adult does, to your point, Tina but that we don't have at any moment in time right now, we don't have 61 kids with the same level of concern. Judy, thank you and Tina, thank you.

Pat, great to have you, as always. The weather is good so that's one we can take off our list, at least for today. Unseasonably warm and sunny for the next couple of days. Anything on compliance, anything on the ranks of the troopers, which God willing will expand as we speak, and any other updates. Thank you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor, good afternoon. A brief Executive Order compliance report. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Chatham Township Police responded to a private residence where there was a large house party. The owner was cited for not only an EO violation, but also underage drinking summonses were issued. To your point with regard to bolstering the ranks of the state police, and thanks to you and your office, we had the 161<sup>st</sup> State Police class report Monday morning to Seger, 203 recruits in a time when a lot of people question, why would you ever want to do that job? It's inspiring to see young men and women that are still ready to come out and serve the citizens of New Jersey. They have a long road ahead of them. I thank also the National Guard who was able to dedicate additional buildings and space to us, which allows us to adhere to social distancing in the training, both in the classroom, self-defense, various mitigations that we put in there, including testing.

Out of all that reported, one out of 203 tested positive and had to be sent home and deferred to the next class. It'll be constant monitoring of both the class and the instructors and to your point, Governor, I hope as many come across that stage and get their badge a few months from now. Thank you for that. That's all I have.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Fantastic. And by the way, a class of 203 with great, I think, record levels of diversity. I believe that's correct.

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

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That's been a big initiative, I know, for you and the Attorney General and your colleagues so hats off to you. Congratulations to each and every one of them. May God watch out for them and may they get through, as many of them get through as possible, and can't wait to be at the graduation when they come through.

I think we'll start with Dustin. Before we do, I think we're on a regular, we're back to the schedule. As you know, we sort of went to remote Facebook Live transmission for a couple of weeks. We reviewed the setup in this room, it was re-cleaned from top to bottom. The spacing, the way that we're gathering we think is responsible and safe and so unless something happens to one of us or one of you in the room, God willing that does not happen, we'll probably continue this way and we'll stay on the Monday-Thursday in-person schedule and then be with you electronically in between.

If the numbers continue to go in the wrong direction, I suspect we may be seeing you more frequently, and I hope that does not happen. But with that, we'll see you Monday here at one o'clock unless you hear otherwise electronically between now and then. Dustin, good afternoon.

### Q&A Session

**Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record:** Good afternoon. You said yesterday that Democrats' strong outcomes around the state were due to progressive politics and governing. How do you square that with Amy Kennedy struggling and maybe not winning, as we know it now, in the 2nd Congressional District? Do you think that's in any way a referendum in that you are viewed as too progressive for that district?

Do you have any update on whether there has been or will be law enforcement actions against any of the people involved in that Trump caravan on the parkway?

There's been a large increase in reports during the pandemic of online child abuse and exploitation. I wanted to know if you'd be willing to join other states that dedicate state funding towards task forces that investigate these crimes, because even with federal money, they're underfunded and under resourced, especially in a pandemic. Thanks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thanks, Dustin. On the third one, the answer conceptually has to be yes. The premise for your question is completely accurate. The incidence of child abuse online, there's no question has gone up, it continues to go up. If we could figure out a smart way to coordinate and approach that with fellow states, you betcha. I don't have any update on the law enforcement as it relates to the parkway, Pat, unless you do?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** At this junction, no summonses have been issued.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Nothing to report there, Dustin. With the specifics of the Amy Kennedy-Jeff Van Drew race, that one has yet to be called. It's the only, I believe correct, this is the only federal seat on the ballot that has yet to be called. I know it's a tight race but I've got no insights right now whether or not I played a role or didn't play a role, but I will just say this. Let me just go through a couple of realities that makes the case that pro-growth progressive politics are what resonates, as they should, with the state right now.

Somerset County, complete sweep of freeholders and constitutional officers; a very competitive race in LD 25, which has been historically a Republican – and I'm not saying this to be partisan. These are the facts. Yet to be called, but very competitive in what has been a Republican bastion, very competitive freeholders in Morris County, historic results in Hunterdon County, including at the community level in places like Flemington and Clinton. A sweep in Mount Laurel, victory in Evesham. Literally, there is evidence, one of our colleagues we think may have won a seat on the town committee. Do we have the results yet?

**Dante:** He's ahead.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** He's ahead? All right. Dante makes his first appearance behind the mic in these past eight months. You know, we're competitive in Green Brook. These are places that we don't normally compete. Let's wait and see how the Amy Kennedy - Jeff Van Drew race comes out but there's evidence all over the place. We're not patting ourselves on the back, but I want to make sure that we make the point that there's a harmony between the policies that we both campaign on and pursue at all levels of the ballot, not just me, and what people in our state want. I think the evidence yesterday or two days ago, pardon me, was overwhelming.

By the way, there's a lot of these races that have yet to be called and so I say LD 25 is competitive. It's far from called. Freeholder, we have a competitive Freeholder race in Morris County, yet to be called. That's par for the course, given the model that we had, mail-in ballots and provisionals. The provisionals, by the way, I want to make sure I say this accurately, I think I said the opposite of this the other day, provisionals can't get counted until we're past the date of when we allowed a properly postmarked mail-in ballot to have been received. That means the election was on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. We gave that until November 10<sup>th</sup> for a ballot to come in that was postmarked by the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Provisionals then start counting on the 4<sup>th</sup>, because only then can you compare Pat Callahan did or didn't send a ballot in by mail, so we can count his provisional ballot. I think we have to finish counting on November 20<sup>th</sup>, Parimal, and certify when?

**Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** We do have to finish counting by November 20<sup>th</sup> and certify by that date. I would just note that provisional ballots can begin being counted on November 11<sup>th</sup>, after the November 10<sup>th</sup> deadline.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yep. If I didn't say that, I meant to say November 10<sup>th</sup> is your deadline, then you wake up on the 11<sup>th</sup> and start to count the provisionals. That count has to stop on November 20<sup>th</sup> and we have to certify the election on that date. That ultimately feeds into the Electoral College. I'm not just saying this because it's convenient in places like Pennsylvania and Georgia and Nevada and Arizona but just like those places, New Jersey is going to count every single ballot, and that's what we should be doing all around the country, and that's what we normally do.

Colleen, is that you back there? Can we do Colleen? Matt, we'll come back down to you right after that.

**Colleen O'Dea, NJ Spotlight:** Hi, thanks, Governor. I have a few election questions. Do you have an update of the number of mail-in ballots received? You've been giving us that every day? I didn't know if you had one today?

Do you know why the ballot tracker is not going to be updated until the 20<sup>th</sup> with the status of your ballot? It's just going to send received until then. A lot of people are questioning if, you know, there is a problem and maybe the mail is not getting the cure letter to them on time, they might miss that opportunity.

Election officials that we've talked to who've talked about things that might be improved or some things that were difficult, they said that if they'd had more time this year they think maybe it could have been a smoother election. I'm wondering if you agree that we should have set this up earlier? You know, made the call earlier?

And then finally, I know you said there were not a lot of glitches but we have heard of a number. There were disabled people who said they couldn't vote on a machine. There were three polling locations in Newark that didn't open until after seven o'clock. There was another one in Newark where the doors were kept locked, they said for security sake, and so people had to bang on the doors and often they said that no one heard them so they couldn't get in.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Were they trying to get out or get in?

**Colleen O'Dea, NJ Spotlight:** Trying to get in to vote. So especially when you look at a place like Newark where you have social justice concerns, I know that the counties run elections, but is this something that the state might look to investigate? How do you prevent things like this from happening in the future? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So the mail-in ballots, Mahen will correct me if I'm wrong, has passed 4 million. It's over 4 million. We'll come back to you. Mahen will give you the exact number. I don't have a good answer on the tracker not being updated until November 20<sup>th</sup>. Parimal, do you have an answer to that. If not, we'll come back to Colleen with it?

**Chief Counsel Parimal Garg:** We'll come back to you on that one.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, bear with us on that, so hang in there. More time. I'll tell you, there's one fix to my way of thinking that addresses both, and there are always glitches and the Newark situation got cured. I know there were lines in Hudson County, they got cured by 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning. And then you asked about whether more time would have helped. We gave a lot of time, I have to say. I admit to you, because we were at the height of the pandemic, we gave less time for the primary but we deliberately made a call, I believe in early to mid-August to give county clerks a fairly long runway. I'll acknowledge that I have heard the same stories about the early morning challenges in Newark and as I mentioned, there were lines I know in Hudson County.

Here's what my fix -- we're going to review all this, we'll do a post mortem, as we did with the primary. This obviously hinges to a great degree on whether or not we're still fighting a pandemic, so let's put that aside for a minute. The one thing that I want that would address a lot of this, and it requires some amount of investment, is early in-person voting.

The mail piece looks like it worked really well, the day of looks like it worked really well, but I'd like to see us get in-person early voting, make the investments in the electronic roll books, and allow folks to vote by machine when they're voting in person either early or on Election Day. Again, still have a mail component, which worked really well, but adding that with the investment that goes with it, I think would, you know, our hope is and it has been since day one is to open up democracy. Folks who are on parole or probation having the right to vote, 17-year-olds at the time of the primary, as long as they turn 18 by the general election, allowing them to vote in the primary is something that we've done. Online registration where we had a huge success this year, I'd love to add in-person early voting to that.

It requires an investment but you then do away with the provisional balloting that we had to live with this year because we couldn't get the investment done in time. Again, all of that is subject to whether or not we're in the throes of a pandemic, which God willing, we won't be in the years to come, but that's my sort of magical configuration. Thank you for that. We'll come back to you on the tracker. Matt, good afternoon.

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Governor, for people who didn't certify for the \$300 benefit and will be able to do it in the second round, do you know when the second round will be open and when people could see money deposited into their accounts?

On COVID, with half of the counties in the state reporting more than 100 cases, when does the hotspot approach become more of a statewide hotspot problem?

And the current rolling average of new cases is up 26% from a week ago, and 230% from the average a month ago so it's about the same where it was in early May when we were on the downslope of the first wave and we still had a lot of these restrictions in place. How close are you to ordering new restrictions based on the increasing cases and hospitalizations? And if not, why, given the trend?

And quickly from Dan Munoz, what's the soonest someone could go into a shop and buy legal cannabis? We're hearing it could be upwards of a year. You mentioned the AG's reminder in your remarks that he sent out yesterday. Given the social justice piece that you've advocated heavily on and the fact that voters have already spoken, are you okay with him saying that? Will you call on him to put out a directive in your capacity of what you can do to stop prosecutions and arrests?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Matt, on the \$300 benefit, I don't have a crisp answer for you. Mahen, can we get to Rob Asaro Angelo and get to Matt out on that?

I'm going to combine your question on, I think you had if I'm reading this, with COVID over 100 and at least half the counties, and then you also said the rolling averages are up meaningfully. How close are we to doing something? Close. Bear with us, we will clearly be taking action. I hope it will be action that balances all the various challenges and interests that we have, but right now we've had really good success and Judy's led it with the hotspot teams. It's worked and it's working, that will continue, without question. Just because it's up everywhere doesn't mean that isn't effective. We're deploying testing, tracing, enforcement, the whole shooting match but we're looking at a number of different steps that we're going to need to take, and so bear with us on that.

On Daniel, could it take up to a year? I think it could. The medical establishments would like to be able to expand their operation sooner than that and that's something that I know, this is all pending legislation that's being worked on and establishing the commission and beginning to name commissioners and executive directors. All of that will begin to happen at least sooner than later.

The medical establishments, as you likely know, have to prove that they are not eating into – no pun intended – their supply for the medical purposes, that they've got excess capacity and that's something that is clearly on the table, and that could theoretically happen sooner. Yeah, I saw what the Attorney General said and I hope there's a lot of weight on the word discretion. There's a wide discretion associated with actions that could be taken and I hope that that is the reality.

I said to Mahen earlier, my wife's uncle was killed in World War II, eight days to go in the war, when it was quite clear that it was only a matter of days till the war was ending. I want to avoid, if humanly possible, we want people to abide by the law. Again, that's not my job. That's Pat's, the Attorney General's, other members, prosecutors, other members of law enforcement. That's their responsibility. But I do hope that in the spirit of what happened on Tuesday, and the Attorney General has said this, to his credit, that discretion is the word of the day. Thank you. Anything, sir?

**Reporter:** Yeah, just one. New Jersey voters approved ballot question three to delay redrawing legislative districts if census results are delayed. Is your hope that the state gets the count on time, or would you prefer the state hold off on redrawing districts? Some who oppose the question say this constitutional amendment is a permanent fix to a temporary problem? What is your response to that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** My hope is that we get an accurate set census count, and I still bemoan the fact that the Trump administration stopped us from counting on what would have been the full clock. I care a lot more about that than the – it's not that I don't care about redistricting but I care overwhelmingly about an accurate census count. I bemoan the fact that I think we got cut off on October 6<sup>th</sup>, does that sound right? With 25 days still left on the clock? I don't know why and I can speculate why but that is not a positive step, and so that's my bigger focus, frankly. I don't view it as a permanent or otherwise, I think in fact, I don't view it

permanently at all. This is a pandemic census being conducted in the midst of a pandemic, which led to that question being raised. But again, my overall overwhelming focus is on getting the right count. Thank you. Hey, Dave.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Hi, Governor. By the way, thank you for returning back to the in person update. Judy, you look great today. You looked good in the virtual but you look great today.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Pat and I will just mail it in today.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** No, you guys look good too.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Now you're just saying that, Dave.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** You had announced the complaint form that is being put up on the website today, it was not up this morning, so that's good news for everybody. But if you have a complaint, could you go through what the process is? Are the Department of Labor inspectors calling a business owner if a complaint has been made? Are they sending them a letter? Do they show up in person? Do they go with law enforcement? How does this work?

And if the inspectors do go in person, do they have the right legally to enter a workplace location without a search warrant? In other words, what happens if they show up and the owner of the business says, yeah, thanks, you can't come in.

Some initial questions were raised about the mail-in voting but overall, I think the system really worked quite well. A lot of people said that. You've mentioned we're expecting more than 4 million mail-in ballots when all is said and done.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** In fact, it's already over 4 million.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Okay. Do you think that the mail-in voting system could be used primarily next year? Do you like it? Is it the wave of the future? You know, I know you had mentioned early in-person voting as well but moving forward, what would have to happen? Would the Legislature have to take action to make this our primary voting system? Because again, it seemed to work quite well overall.

Last question, how confident are you and the Commissioner and the Epidemiologist with regard to the hotspot teams stopping the pandemic from spiraling out of control? Because these numbers keep going up and up and up. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** All good questions. I don't have a specific answer – you're right, it was not up this morning. It is now, so it's [covid19.nj.gov/safe](https://www.nj.gov/covid19/nj.gov/safe). I'd like to come back to you and answer your first question, Dave. We'll get Mahen to come to you in terms of how the Department of Labor, actually how they follow up. I suspect, without knowing the answer, I suspect it is consistent with any complaint they would have received about a workplace condition. This is now a very specific element of that workplace condition which we haven't been dealing with before. And by the way, most industries and most employers, to their credit, had been doing the right thing. As usual, most folks do the right thing and you've just got to bring a few more of them along who are acting in a non-compliant way.

Again, I think you're absolutely right. The mail-in process was a big success. Having said that, I'd like it to be, my perfect world and again, bear with us while we do a complete and thorough post mortem, I kind of addressed this already to Colleen's question. But I do want to reiterate, I personally want to get back to machine voting but we need an investment in electronic poll book is what folks call it colloquially, that would allow us to have side-by-side mail-in ballots, in-person early voting, and same-day Election Day voting. That does require legislation, it does require an investment. I don't have a crisp number for you. I think it's plus or minus in the \$20 million to \$30 million range but it's a one-time investment. That to me, this is in addition to the other steps we've taken, parole, probation, 17-year-olds, online registration. If you had that electronic poll book, you could continue to be aggressive on mail-in voting. You could allow in person early, and you'd have either in-person or same-day election on machines. Because I know the whole notion of voting by paper is a bone in some people's throat. It isn't in mine, but I understand why it is. That to me is the perfect constellation. We'll come back to you on the Department of Labor if that's okay but again, I suspect it's following up as they do on any workplace condition matter.

With that a quick drink. Oh, sorry. Hotspots. I believe we are going to migrate sooner than later. I can't promise you when or how that will look. Hotspot teams will continue to be center stage but I think we collectively, all of us think we need to augment that with some broader steps. Is that a fair statement? It's not either/or, so bear with us on that. But they will continue to be – it's working. We've got evidence, when Judy sends them in, it actually works. And by the way, there's a compliance piece that goes along with that so when she's plussing up testing, tracing, public service announcements in multiple languages if need be, there's also eyes on the ground at both the state level and local level. Sorry, I forgot that.

I'm going to mask up, if that's all right. Thanks, everybody, Good to be back in the room. Again, expect that we'll continue to be doing this as long as we can do it safely and responsibly. Again, we're going to count every single vote in New Jersey, and we're going to count every single vote in America. That's the way it has to be, it's the way it's always been and always must be, and let the chips fall where they may. We will keep you posted as we as we go through the next couple of weeks in terms of those counts in New Jersey.

Again, I salute everybody. A really successful election season, win, lose or draw, it appears to work. I've already mentioned a couple of tweaks that we'd like to see and we'll work with our Legislative colleagues to get to that place. I want to thank Judy and Tina on the right, Pat on the left, Jared, Mahen, the whole team.

Folks, please fight through that fatigue. Please fight through that fatigue. We've got a good fact right now. In the next few days, it's nice out. It's nice weather. It's in the 60s, it's sunny. Folks, try to do as much of your life for the next few days outdoors. That alone would help us. Let's use this when we have it, as opposed to that miserable, cold, rainy stretch that we came through. But most importantly, fight through the fatigue. We've done it before, folks, you've done it before. We can, we will do it again. Many thanks, everybody. God bless.

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