

Governor Phil Murphy

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you very much for bearing with us with a later start today. 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, thank you both for being here. Guy to my left needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. We have the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples is with us; Deputy Counsel Parimal Garg and others.

So beginning over the weekend, our team was in touch with the White House to further discussions on rapid testing resources for New Jersey. Following those conversations and as was laid out in a video meeting three of us just came from, we've been notified that New Jersey will receive a total of \$2.6 million of the BinaxNOW rapid tests being produced by Abbott Labs. This is an antigen test that can provide results in 15 minutes with a very easy nasal swab, as opposed to the straight up, turn left variety that we all started with. The first 170,000 of those tests will be coming within the next two weeks. These new tests will significantly scale up our testing capabilities. The Department of Health obviously, under Judy's leadership, we'll be working with our federal and local partners on a distribution plan.

This could be, if it comes to pass in the way that it has been described over the weekend and in the call that we all just left, this could be a game changer. When you do the math, it's just shy of doubling our daily testing capacity for about 12 weeks. That allows, Judy we talked earlier, you could plus up testing, immediate overnight resources into a hotspot, such as we're seeing an Ocean County, which I know you'll talk about. You could envision it being a big weapon in schools, a school setting; a big weapon in augmenting our already



ongoing efforts with healthcare workers or vulnerable populations, so a potential game changer. I want to thank the administration. I also want to thank Abbott CEO Bob Ford who was on the call that we just got off. As we learn more about this, we'll keep you posted, but this is a big deal.

Next, working under a timeline that's put forward by FEMA, I have sent President Trump a request for a formal major disaster declaration and recovery funds for counties battered by Tropical Storm Isaias in early August. All totaled, we are requesting just shy of \$34.2 million in major disaster recovery funds. These funds are necessary to help state, county and local officials recoup the cost of the cleanup from the storm. The damage from Isaias led to roughly 1.4 million New Jerseyans losing power and many of those outages extended, as you'll recall, for multiple days, along with multiple disruptions to mass transit and road closures due to downed power lines and trees. Numerous water systems also had to move to alternate power, among other problems.

Because of the amount of storm damage, the state had to open 13 temporary debris management sites. In particular, we're requesting a major disaster declaration for the following counties: Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Monmouth, Morris, Salem and Sussex Counties. Storm damages in these counties range from \$3.87 cents per capita, and that's in Sussex County, to \$32.42 cents per capita in Salem County. Both of those far exceed the baseline mark of \$1.53 per capita to qualify for assistance. Cumberland, Gloucester and Monmouth Counties each also exceeded \$10 in damage per capita. The statewide per capita impact of tropical storm Isaias was \$3.89. We are hopeful for the swift consideration of our request. I want to thank the guy to my left, Colonel Pat Callahan and the team from the Office of Emergency Management, under the leadership of Executive Officer Captain Scott Bolton for pulling our request together and getting it within FEMA's timeframe.

Next, switching gears again, earlier today I was honored to join with Legislative sponsors and advocates virtually to sign a new state law permanently exempting military combat pay from state income taxes. That's Senator Mike Testa on the upper left, General Jemal Beale in the upper right, and Assemblywoman Quijano on the lower right. Both the Senator and Assemblywoman were two of the bipartisan group of sponsors. To say this is long overdue does not serve this point justice, this measure. We are the last, I think this is shameful, we are the last American state to have done this. We want to be one or two; to be 50 is just jaw dropping. But this is a long overdue measure for our active duty military women and men who literally put themselves in harm's way in service to our nation.

This is, at long last, a statement of our New Jersey values, values that honor service to our nation, and to our fellow New Jerseyans. This new law is a worthy complement to our ongoing efforts to ensure that the service of our military men and women is properly honored once their days in uniform are over, whether that be in providing educational and job training opportunities, in healthcare, housing or any of the services they and their families need. So to every New Jerseyan who wears our nation's military uniforms, thank you for your service and we also thank all, every single one of our veterans.

With that, let's move on and take a look at the overnight numbers. We're reporting today an additional 561 positive test results for a new statewide cumulative total of 204,107. As Judy will remind us in a few minutes, the numbers over the weekend were also quite high. We continue to see the statewide number driven in large part, not completely, but in large part by significant new cases coming out of Ocean County; 242, for instance, of the 561 today, about 40%. That's today's number. We're maintaining our lines of communication with county and community leaders as we work together to mitigate these outbreaks.

Now, by contrast, there were also 54 cases reported today from Middlesex County. That was number two, but all other counties were 35 new case cases or fewer, and that's a good thing. For all tests recorded on Thursday, September 24th, the positivity rate was 2.48%. The statewide rate of transmission is currently down a hair, I guess bouncing around in the same neighborhood, 1.12. In our hospitals as of last night, 236 confirmed COVID positive patients, 185 persons under investigation awaiting test results, the total is 421. Of these, 91 were in intensive care, 39 ventilators were in use.

Sadly, we are reporting one additional death, bringing the total of confirmed deaths to 14,316. The number of probable deaths remains at 1,791. And again, at the risk of comparing apples to oranges, Judy, I've got sadly 16 deaths reported in our hospitals yesterday. Again, those are not part of the confirmed numbers. Now as

we do every day, let's remember three more who this pandemic has taken away from our extraordinary New Jersey family.

We begin in Fort Lee, the home of Francesca Porco, who was a recognizable face in Fort Lee High School's cafeteria as one of the dedicated food service workers. She was 72 years old. That she loved her job would not be a surprise to anyone who knew her, as Francesca always made sure her family and friends were welcomed with open arms and very often with a good meal. She loved giving back and she loved helping others, and she was loved by the students she served and the colleagues she worked alongside.

Francesca had an abiding passion for gardening, and the tomatoes she grew were often the basis for those home-cooked meals she so willingly served to family and friends. Alongside them were the roses that she tended to. And after her passing, her family noted that they hoped Francesca found a place in heaven where she can prune and pick roses and grow tomatoes. She'll also be remembered for her tremendous talent for dancing and how she and her husband, Antonio, could basically clear any dance floor as others would watch them with awe.

Francesca leaves behind her husband Antonio and their sons Guzzo and Dominic, and I had the great honor of speaking with Dominic on Saturday morning. She's also survived by her brothers Giovanni and Pietro, both of whom live in Italy, and numerous nieces and nephews both here in New Jersey as well as in Italy. We certainly hope Francesca has found that special place in heaven. May God bless and watch over her and her loved ones.

Next, we remember on the left Ivette Alers-Elizalde of Fairview in Bergen County. Ivette was a native of Union City, raised by a mother who was a Colombian immigrant and a father who hailed from Puerto Rico. Ivette, by the way, was only 47 years old. She earned her degree in speech pathology and audiology from St. John's University, and for the past two decades was an educator at Union City's Robert Waters School, where she had garnered Teacher of the Year honors. In every aspect of her career she stood out, whether it be from her quick wit, the relationship she built with her colleagues, or with the easygoing nature that allowed her to garner enormous trust from her fourth grade students.

But it was a love of family that set Ivette apart. Her father passed away several years ago, and Ivette would take time after work every day to visit her mother, who lived only a few blocks from the Robert Waters School. At home in Fairview, she was dedicated to her husband of 18 years, Juan, and that's Juan one on the right. I had the great honor of speaking with him on Friday. They met in college, and she was devoted to that guy in the middle, her 10-year-old son Nicholas, often helping him with his homework and when school was out, taking him to the pool in North Bergen.

She leaves them all behind, along with so many family, friends and colleagues, and of course, her beloved students. We thank Ivette for her years of service to the children of Union City, and for her devotion to her family. May God bless and watch over her and her loved ones.

And finally for today, we recall Don Batayola of Springfield. You think Don was a proud American? God bless that guy. Don was born in the Philippines and came to New Jersey 13 years ago to pursue opportunities in the healthcare field. Don was an occupational therapist at South Mountain Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Union Township. He passed away the day that he and his wife Nina were to leave on a vacation to Europe. Don and Nina spoke at least once a day while he was being treated and she was self-quarantined. His passing was sudden and unexpected.

That vacation, had it happened, wouldn't have caught anyone by surprise. Don loved to travel, whether a getaway with Nina or a whole family vacation with their 11-year-old child Zoey and nine-year-old guy Zeth. Don was also once able to merge his love of travel with his love of reggae music, taking a trip to Jamaica to visit the birthplace of Bob Marley. Don was only 40 years old, so two of our three fatalities today, 47 and 40 years old. I asked his wife Nina, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Friday, did he have underlying health issues or conditions? She said no, he was in very good health.

So he leaves Nina behind, Zoey and Zeth, along with numerous other family members across the country several of whom, by the way, also work in healthcare. Our hearts go out to them all. We thank Don for choosing to make New Jersey and the United States of America the home for his family and may God bless and watch over him and his family.

So Francesca, Ivette and Don reflect the tremendous diversity of our state, and they show how indiscriminate and cruel this virus is. Their memories and the pain felt by those left behind should be what spurs us to fighting against this pandemic. We are not out of the woods yet, and the numbers we've been seeing the past week or so Judy, at this point, bear that out. We are all experiencing some level of understandable fatigue. That's only natural after the past nearly seven months, but now is the time we have to dig deep and find some added resolve. So please remember wash your hands, wear your masks, keep a social distance, stay away if you don't feel well, get tested. We cannot let up.

Now finally for today, let's meet another of the entrepreneurs who's partnered with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to help set the foundation for the stronger, fairer and more resilient New Jersey we know will emerge in this pandemic. This is Jim Schatzle, President of Team Life, a Colts Neck-based company – by the way, I think he said he founded it 26 years ago – that not only markets and provides automated external defibrillators, but also leads training sessions for healthcare professionals, emergency workers and everyday residents in CPR and AED use.

Team Life sprang from Jim's own 30-plus years of experience as an EMT and paramedic, and because of the training that he and his team provide, countless New Jerseyans have learned valuable lifesaving skills. To keep Team Life strong and ready to continue its mission, Jim worked with the EDA to receive both an emergency assistance loan and a grant that has allowed him to pay his business expenses. I had the opportunity to check in with Jim on Friday, among other things, I realized and learned that he was the brother of a dear family friend, Cindy Westendorf, so shout out to Cindy as well. I thanked him for all that Team Life is doing to help others. Check them out, they're at teamlife.com. I once again encourage all small business owners to go to that website, njeda.com to see what programs may be available to help your business.

That's as good a place as any for us to wrap up for the day. Please, with no further ado, help me welcome the Commissioner of the Department of Health, the woman who needs no introduction, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. In the past six days we have reported about 3,660 new cases, and 28% of those new cases are in Ocean County. In response to this level of new cases, our hotspot team has increased the testing capacity in all sites in the county, and tomorrow 20 contact tracers will be deployed to support case investigation. Our goal with this increased testing and contact tracing capacity is to contain the transmission of the virus in that county. Also, we continue to monitor cases closely to identify other areas of the state that may be experiencing an uptick.

As part of the overall CDC surveillance, the agency has been working to estimate the percentage of those in the United States with COVID-19 antibodies. They have collected lab results from every state and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In the first round, the testing of samples took place between July 9th and August 12th. New Jersey reports the second-highest seroprevalence at 14.7%; New York being highest. According to the CDC, estimates were highest among children and younger adults from the ages of 18 to 49, and lowest in the 65-plus age group.

The finding of the data is limited because we don't know if it is truly representative of the state. However, it is unknown whether the samples come from an area of the state with high or low prevalence of COVID-19 cases. At this time, there is still a lot we do not know about serology. Since this is a new virus, we don't know if a person who is exposed is immune to future exposures of SARS-COV-2 but these tests are valuable for epidemiology and research studies.

What we also do not know specifically is false positive results may occur with any serologic test if a person has previously been exposed to, for example, seasonal coronavirus which circulate yearly in the United States and cause mild cold symptoms. We do know that a seroprevalence of 15% is not sufficient for community protection, also talked as herd immunity, but what we really talk about is community protection. CDC plans on doing additional rounds of data sampling in the coming weeks. They plan to post this data on their website.

I would like to give you some further information about the Abbott BinaxNOW test. It is an FDA-approved point of care antigen test for COVID-19. No equipment is required. The sample is collected via a nasal swab and run on a card that uses what they call lateral flow technology. It has a 97.1% sensitivity, and a 98.5% percent specificity. That was from a clinical trial of 102 individuals. Results are delivered in 15 minutes. And although the federal government is sending us the tests for free, the actual cost of the Abbott test is about \$5.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 421 hospitalizations; 91 individuals in critical care which is slightly up, and 43% of those patients are on ventilators.

We are reporting one new case of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, so there are now 58 cases in our state. The children affected have either tested positive for active COVID-19 infection or have antibody tests that are positive to COVID-19 exposure. In New Jersey, there are no deaths reported at this time. The ages of the children affected range from 1 to 18. None of these children are currently hospitalized. The breakdown of race and ethnicity of these cases is White 17%, Black 35%, Hispanic 39%, Asian 6%, and other 4%.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths. In terms of race and ethnicity of mortalities, White is 54.1%, Black 18.3%, Hispanic 20.3%, Asian 5.5%, and other 1.9%.

At the state veterans homes, one resident at the Vineland facility has tested positive, bringing the total cases among patients to 390. There are no new deaths. At our state psychiatric hospitals, the numbers remain the same.

New Jersey reports an overall positivity as of September 24th of 2.48%. The Northern part of the state reports 1.62, the Central part of the state, which includes Ocean and Monmouth, report 3.70 and the Southern part of the state reports 2.58.

That concludes my daily update. Please stay safe, wear your mask, wash your hands frequently, socially distance and remember, for each other, for us all, please take the call.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. I'd love to go back to the CDC study. So again, to reiterate what Judy said, I think what they did was they went back to all blood that had been tested for any reason over the past six-plus months, so not just COVID related but you went in to get a blood check for surgery or to see if you had strep throat, whatever it might have been; 14-ish percent of New Jersey's population was deemed to have been exposed to this.

You made the very important point that this does not translate into immunity, which is still, Tina, still being fiercely debated in medical and science circles around the world. But even if it were, even if we found out that that were to be the case, when people talk about herd immunity, they're talking in the 50% to 70% range in most of the conversations, right? Even if every one of those people are immune, and it's pretty clear they're not, or at least it's being debated, it's at 14-plus percent, second-largest only to New York City, I believe, right?

I want to make sure it's less of a question, I want to make sure that I get that right. That underscores a pretty important point, we're number two with a long way to go, even in terms of exposure. It also underscores that while the vaccine may not be the panacea or the magic wand, it's a big step if you get that number, again, meaningfully higher. Thank you, and thank you always for reminding us of the inequities whether it's infant syndrome, whether it's COVID-19 overall.

Pat, good to have you. Thank you for everything. Again, thank you to you and your team, Captain Polte and the rest of them at FEMA. Dan Kelly was part of that in our office for getting that application together. We'd love to hear anything you got on compliance. I'm not sure if there's anything else on FEMA, how our firefighters are doing and anything else you've got?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. There were no compliance issues reported to the ROIC over the weekend. With regard to the forest fire crew that's out there, the 10 that went out for the past two weeks arrived home safely yesterday, that was confirmed with us. The 10 that took their place went right to work almost immediately and fought in a very heavy fire day yesterday. The task force leader out there has also confirmed that they remain safe and healthy, so we keep them in our prayers as well. We get daily updates, Governor, with regards to how that forest fire crew is doing out there. As you can just see on the news, they are certainly busy in supporting all efforts to bring all of those wildfires under control. That's all I have, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. I know we'll do one more commercial at the end of the week for the Semper Five in Seaside Heights this Saturday. I completely butchered the name of our good friends that Josephsons on Friday, I think I transposed a different last name, but it was a very successful 5-K in memory of Samantha Josephson, who's the young woman who got into an Uber in South Carolina and ultimately was

killed. The Say My Name 5-K, which is the name of the law that now requires rideshare companies to be able to say who you are before you're required to get in the car. The 5-K on Saturday in Robbinsville was a huge success. I know that because my wife ran in it and ran a decent pace, I might add. I'm not quite there yet.

And our Jewish brothers and sisters are not with us and they're probably not watching but I want to say in absentia, they are celebrating and observing Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days of the year. We are with them in spirit and prayer. This week, unless we hear otherwise, Mahen, we'll be on the Monday, Wednesday, Friday in person. Today, we're a little bit later. By the way, the White House call was almost entirely on testing, so we've started to address that to some extent, but expect that we'll be virtual tomorrow and be with you in person on Wednesday at one o'clock. And with that, Matt's with us with the microphone. Hello, Dustin.

Q&A Session

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Hello. You signed a bill in April to gather and analyze local and county data on ethnicity, age and gender, but we're almost at October, six months later, and there still isn't any of that data publicly available. Can you explain what the holdup is? How can any meaningful policies be made to address racial disparities and other inequities if you don't exactly know what and where they are?

On a potential vaccine, have you narrowed down what your priority populations will be, and are you confident you'll have enough PPE to administer the vaccine once it comes?

Finally, is the DOH investigating the cause of death at the veterans homes that are not lab-confirmed COVID cases? If so, how many of the 1,800 probable deaths statewide are from veterans homes?

Governor Phil Murphy: Stay close to the mic. Dustin, I literally didn't understand the bill, the first one you asked me about.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Having the state gather and analyze local and county data on things like ethnicity, age and gender.

Governor Phil Murphy: This is related only to COVID?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. I don't have a quick answer for you in terms of, you're saying you can't get the data or you don't see where the data is?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: It isn't publicly available as far as I know.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. Parimal, Do you have a crisp answer to that? Or if not, we'll get back to you.

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: We'll look into it and we'll get back.

Governor Phil Murphy: Can we come back to you on that? Judy should go over vaccine in terms of, I mean to say we had an elaborate meeting a week ago Friday, I guess. This is a very -- you know, it probably is not a bad idea to hit the high spots of that at one of our upcoming press conferences. But the answer is yes on PPE. That's part of the big reason why we're building the stockpile that we're building. But I'll have Judy come to you in a second on broadly describing the broad populations and priorities.

I think we're going to need to come back to you in terms of, you're asking me how many of the 1,791 are related to veterans homes, right? I don't have a quick answer, but we can come back to you on that. But Judy, anything on that or on the vaccine priorities?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: On the vaccine priority priorities, we've just received the playbook, as you know, just about a week ago from CDC, and we're looking over it along with the advisors that are providing us information on what those priority populations may look like. We don't have that yet. We know broadly there are two initial priorities, 1A and 1B, things like essential workers, broadly individuals over 65 that are vulnerable individuals, but we don't have the breakdown specifically at this point.

Governor Phil Murphy: But broad categories.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think with a full vaccine presentation, we can break it down even more.

Governor Phil Murphy: And can you follow up on the veterans homes in terms of the probables?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I don't have that, the probable, but I'm sure we can get a breakdown and come back.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Dustin. Matt, Good afternoon.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. On the Abbott testing, can you just give a little bit more information about what we're talking about here and when the 2.6 million would come to fruition? Judy, I take it so these aren't the machines, these are the cards, and just maybe a little bit more color about where they're going to be distributed beyond just schools and nursing homes.

Governor, you've said recently over the course of a couple of weeks here that compliance with indoor dining has been good, but my colleagues have gone to several restaurants around the state and have found quite the opposite. People aren't wearing masks when they're not eating, tables might be a little bit closer together. Just curious, who is checking on the compliance of restaurants? Are any spot checks being done by health officials? What's been your observation or observation of your administration?

And maybe just putting on your DGA Chairman hat here, I'm just curious, assuming that you read the New York Times story about President Donald Trump and his tax returns. Curious to get your reaction on him paying little nothing in income taxes over the past two dozen years.

Governor Phil Murphy: The past forever. That was the longest article I've seen that are that I've ever seen in my life. Seven pages, I think, of that newspaper. So the Abbott test, 2.6 million in total, 170,000 per week. I think we are going to get them Judy, or Pat, in batches, I believe. Next week is the first, within the next 10 to 14 days is the first batch. It was demonstrated. It's the easy front lobe of your nose and then you basically you've got a card that looks like a credit card and you wipe it along that and you've got an answer within 15 minutes.

You have to register, you are registered as to who you are because there is a reporting back to the feds, which there should be, and there certainly would be reporting at a statewide level. We spoke, and Judy's been thinking this through privately about the types of categories of – I don't have a crisp final answer for you in terms of where the first set of tests goes, but it will be a combination of vulnerable underserved communities, essential workers, frontline healthcare. It'll be keeping things that are open, open, and ensuring that they stay open. We talked with the White House, that'll be pre-K through 12, that'll be some higher ed.

And it will also be in some form, I can't give you a crisp answer on this yet, but some form of keeping the economy opening. How that actually translates itself, I think too early to tell. The description we were back and forth on with the White House is that you could get the school nurse to be CLIA approved essentially to distribute, to be able to execute on this test. The discussion we had earlier was you've got a student, a young kid who may have some symptoms, you bring them in, the school nurse supplies the test, you know right away with a high degree of certainty whether or not the young student is COVID positive, or he or she has got something else and you deal with it separately. That's a good example of a real-time usage of this thing.

I read the headlines of the press about indoor dining. The principal responsibility, but you all should come in here, is both local law enforcement and local health authorities. We do spot check, we spot check the state on a regular basis and it's worth reiterating, we haven't said this in a while. Under Pat's leadership, the State Police has primary local enforcement in 89 communities, and they're all over the state, so you've got a litmus test there.

I would just say this, if you see bad compliance, let us know because I can't guarantee you that we're catching it all, I promise you. Anecdotally, we rely on the compliance report that Pat gets back. He's on the phone with, I think you were on with Big City Mayors a couple of days ago with the Attorney General on a broader remit; you're on with police chiefs on a regular basis. Judy's in touch with the local health authorities. For instance, I don't think our challenges in Ocean County, we have any evidence that it's indoor dining; indoor activity, but not indoor dining. But yeah, if you've got evidence of it, we'll take it.

Yeah, I mean, my God on the taxes. I mean, where do you begin? A couple of things that hit me without getting into the layers and layers of it. Number one, we pay taxes, it's part of the deal when you're an American, right? You sign up, okay, I'm going to pay taxes. You may not like what you pay, but there's a deal

you pay in and you get stuff back, whether it's education, public health, roads, bridges, infrastructure, housing, whatever it might be, and so that leaves you kind of cold.

Secondly, I would just always think of the contrast, nobody of significant means like that should be paying less than a working family is right now in New Jersey. That's also not part of the deal.

And I guess the other observation I had was, you know, we talk a lot about the folks who have done well and we don't begrudge their success, but we're asking them right now, in New Jersey, to step up and pay a few pennies more on their top dollars earned, and take those proceeds and plow it into the middle class. That's what we're doing here and I'm proud of that. I know there's some amount of sacrifice associated with that by a group of folks and I acknowledge that and I thank them for their willingness to help us out. It strikes a very discordant note with that notion.

I guess with all three notions. The deal is when you're an American, you pay in, you get stuff back. Secondly, I can't fathom someone who's that well off paying less than a working family. And thirdly, I'm proud and glad we're doing what we're doing in New Jersey, because that's the way it should be. It should be the other direction. Folks who have means paying a little bit more to help us rebuild our middle class. And by the way, when you do that everybody benefits, including the folks who are really well off. Real quick, yeah.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: With respect to Abbott though, I forgot to ask. What is our current daily testing numbers, and just also you didn't strike this, do you have a timeline when we'll get to the 2.6 million?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, sorry, it's 170 a week, so you could do the math, it's something like 12 weeks. It isn't quite this today, Matt but if you have a positive -- and by the way, the days don't necessarily line up, but if you've got positive tests of 500 and your spot positivity is 2%. You can multiply that by 50 and you get something that looks like 25,000, plus or minus. Thank you for that. Alex, good afternoon.

Alex Napoliello, NJ.com: Good afternoon, Governor. For Commissioner Persichilli, Coronavirus numbers in Europe, including Germany and France, have stopped their decline and are starting to rise again. Since it appeared that last time a lot of travelers from Europe to the metro area brought COVID here, how concerned are you about that? How closely are you watching the European numbers and what kind of lag time can we expect between something happening there and something coming here?

For Governor Murphy, the Legislature, a few moments ago, approved \$4.5 billion in borrowing, the special committee, so I wanted your reaction to that, in addition to your reaction to any sort of these Christmas tree items in the budget. You know, you say the state's in dire financial straits, we need to borrow \$4.5 billion. We have a lot of economic damage from COVID-19. Why should taxpayers also be paying \$4 million for a golf program, \$1 million for neighborhood redevelopment in Paterson, a shade tree program, among others? You said that you're going to sign the budget as is, so you won't be using your line item veto to get rid of these. Why should taxpayers be on the hook?

Governor Phil Murphy: Well, there's a good reason for most of them but I'll get to that in a minute. The general notion of first of all, you're absolutely right with the premise of your question about Europe, it is on the rise. Germany's the country there that I know best and I read some summary news every morning on there, but you can see it in Spain, you see it most places except Italy, by the way, ironically right now. There was a lot of unmitigated free travel between Europe and Greater New York and New Jersey in the winter and early spring. That's really not the case right now. I don't know if there's anything else you want to add to that.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We look at international trends, along with national trends on a daily basis, so we keep an eye on it. We think with our testing capacity right now and the addition of further testing, we're looking at testing right now we're doing between 30,000 and 35,000 tests a day. We keep looking at the testing, good contact tracing. I think we can mitigate what's going on, but we do look at it. It's concerning.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep. Particularly in places that have deemed to have been really good at it. I'll pick Germany out, not just because they're in that category, but I happen to know them better than the other European countries. You see, even with best efforts, you see cases starting to rise, and I think we're in a best

effort state category and we've seen cases rise. Again, our positivity rate has stayed among the lowest in the country and our rate of transmission, while it's over one, it's been stuck in sort of a zone and let's hope it stays that way.

I'd say a couple of things on the budget. Number one, I did not know about the Legislature, the special committee authorizing the \$4.5 billion. Again, none of us wake up reflexively, hey gosh, let's go out and borrow a bunch of money. It's one lever of many that we've had to pull at a time which is, again, I'll repeat it, compared only to the 1930s and the 1860s. To say this is unusual would be an understatement so I'm gratified to hear that.

Listen, a budget is a collaborative effort. Not everyone's priorities make it across the goal line. You know, Paul Sarlo last week, who's the Senate Budget Chair, made a point that I thought was a good one that these are, in most cases, overwhelmingly priorities from local communities up and down the state for both Republican and Democratic-led communities. They were advocated both privately but also publicly. I think when you've got things like healthcare-related expenses for low income residents, hard to call that pork. So with all due respect, this is not directed to you, but our brothers and sisters on the other side of the aisle, who were, you know, you've got a homeless initiative that's funded or a higher education program that's funded. I have to say, with all due respect, these are overwhelmingly bubbling up from communities from both sides of the aisle. I'd say the phrase that's been used last week a lot, pork, with all due respect, most of these are not.

Having said that, last comment, is every one of these items something that I would have had in there or that was a personal priority? No, it never is when you have a collaborative, negotiated budget as this was. That's goes with the territory. Thank you. Dave, over to you.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. As you guys were highlighting a little bit earlier, especially in Ocean County, we're seeing this big spike in cases, 500 some odd today for the entire state, but obviously in Ocean County a lot more. There's been general discussion to this point about what's causing this and we're thinking maybe religious gatherings and so forth. Do we still believe that? And if we do, is it time to look at perhaps limiting the top number, which is I believe 150 indoors or 25%, whatever is less? Is this a concern moving forward? I mean, we've got the holiday season is right around the corner. Thanksgiving, holiday parties, Christmas Eve Mass. You know, you're talking about a lot of people indoors at a lot of different types of functions.

Governor Phil Murphy: Dave, is Christmas Eve Mass around the corner?

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Close. Time's flying, Governor. You've got to stay with this stuff.

Governor Phil Murphy: We missed Halloween and Thanksgiving.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Okay, well there's Halloween, too but I don't know how many indoor Halloween parties there are. That being said though, obviously this is a source of concern. Is there anything else going on besides these indoor religious services, do we think? What's your sense about maybe revisiting, or is it possible we need to revisit the number of people that are allowed inside to get together? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll give you my thoughts and Judy, you should weigh in, and Tina or Pat in this case. I think you're still parsing through the sources of this. I think worshipping, coming together and things like you had an anecdotal story about a wedding. We know a funeral service recently led to a bunch of cases. That's one whole category.

School or school related, we've talked about. We are still, Judy and our teams, trying to figure out how best to characterize and how to present that data. Sports, but still it's ancillary. It's the ancillary activity that is alongside the sport activity such as the pizza party, indoor house party. We had some higher ed, we had Rowan we've talked about. I know, Judy, you've plussed up the team into Ocean County for both testing as well as tracing and we'll know more about this over time. You've got a religious holiday today, as I mentioned a few minutes ago.

I think it's something, the short answer for me is we monitor it, and we'll continue to monitor it. You're right about the numbers, it's 25% or 150, whichever you get to, lowest first. This is one of the many levers that we've pulled that we're going to continue to monitor in real time. Anything you want to add to that? You good? Thank you. Real quick, Dave.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Would you consider or would you think about possibly lowering that total?

Governor Phil Murphy: Everything is always on the table. Always on the table. The answer has to be yes but you don't do that reflexively. You only want to do that if you know that that is the reason and that you know you'll get something back for that. Thank you. Nikita.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Hi, Governor. Shortly after the primary, USPS emailed the Director of the Division of Elections saying that roughly 6,500 votes received on July 7th were incorrectly postmarked and mailed on July 8th. This was revealed in a recent filing in the Trump campaign suit against the general election rules. Did you know about these votes? Why wasn't the incorrect postmarking disclosed? At a time when Americans and New Jerseyans are concerned about the prospect of voting by mail, how do you reassure them that it's safe when information about problems with the system are withheld from the public?

And of those roughly 6,500 votes, how many – were all counted? Were some counted? Were none counted?

Governor Phil Murphy: I literally was just told about this an hour ago, so for two reasons, I don't have a crisp answer for you. Number one, it's part of a legal proceeding so therefore I wouldn't comment in any event. But secondly, I was just made aware of this as a top line matter, in fact, with less detail I think than with which you've just gone through. So the answer is when did I find out about it? About an hour, to an hour-and-a-half ago so I've got no more color on that. If we do get more color, I said to Mahen that we owe you all a follow up.

Now listen, the bigger question is your second one or last one, which is how do you give people a sense of security? I think, again, I can't give any more color on this because I'm not up to speed on what that color may look like. We had overwhelmingly a successful hybrid model in the primary and we've made it even stronger for the general election. We gave counties a lot more advanced notice. Everybody's going to get a ballot as opposed to that reality in a primary where if you're not affiliated, you've got to pick your party and request that ballot. We've been on with the US Postal Service regularly. We're now going to have many more, we're going to have secure drop boxes around the state, measured in the high two hundreds. Polling capacity will not just be an aspiration, it will be a reality to either hand your ballot in or show up and vote by paper.

Parimal will correct me, if a ballot is received, if it's postmarked within two days and received within seven, is that correct?

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: If the ballot is postmarked by Election Day, and then if the ballot doesn't have a postmark, if it's received by the Board of Elections within 48 hours of polls closing, that's going to count.

Governor Phil Murphy: So either postmarked by Election Day or if it doesn't have a stamp on it and received within two days. And then we're giving ourselves seven days, as we did in the primary, to count the ballots. We've also allowed pre, early counting. Leakage around which comes now with great penalties, as it should. There's a lot of reasons why I feel confident in saying that we've got a system that's secure, your vote can count. You can both protect your public health and exercise your right to vote. Real quick, please.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: So is it a problem then, in your view, that in the months since the primary that you've been up here praising how it was conducted and the systems, saying that it went very well, where you weren't told that there were thousands of votes that were –

Governor Phil Murphy: How many votes were cast in the primary, do you recall?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: I can't recall off the top of my head.

Governor Phil Murphy: Parimal, do you know?

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: I think it was 1.2 million or so.

Governor Phil Murphy: I incorporate my prior answer by reference. I feel very good about what we've put forward and I think it's going to be a really successful, regardless of who you vote for, by the way. I don't care who you vote for, just vote and know that your vote will be counted and please stay safe.

Judy, Tina, thank you as always. Pat, likewise, Jared, Parimal, Matt, Mahen, the whole team. Again, virtual tomorrow. Live and in person with you at one o'clock on Wednesday unless we hear otherwise. We will be together tomorrow. We will be at an event unrelated to this – am I breaking news to talk about that at one

o'clock. Okay, and that'll be here. We're going to sign the budget tomorrow at one o'clock. I think I am breaking news. I look forward to that.

Again, to everybody out there, thank you for everything you're doing. Please keep up the great work and just remember the basics, face covering, social distancing, wash with soap and water, stay home if you don't feel well, get tested. That last part, get tested, we're already testing at or among either the number one or among the top testing per capita states of the nation. We're about to almost double that, Judy, and we'll put that to good use. Thank you all. God bless.

Governor Phil Murphy

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