

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: August 19th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. Let me start out by saying Happy Birthday to President Bill Clinton who turn 74 today, and Happy Birthday to our very own Dan Bryan who turns 24. With me is the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health. Judy Persichilli. To her right, the Department of Health's Disease Service Medical Director, Dr. Ed Lifshitz, great to have you both. The guy who needs no introduction to my left, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan; Jared Maples is here, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. Good afternoon, everybody.

Let me begin by making an unequivocal statement. Our democracy is stronger and fairer when all voters have the right to not just cast a ballot, but to cast that ballot in confidence. The President's campaign is putting itself on record as wanting to delegitimize our November election, instead of working with us to ensure that voters' rights are upheld alongside public health. This goes far beyond attempts at weaponizing the United States Postal Service to disenfranchise voters. This is now becoming a full-throated propaganda campaign to undermine the election itself.

Vote by mail has been used extensively across the country including, I might add, in the five states that almost exclusively use vote by mail for every election. And vote by mail is not new in New Jersey either. It takes on the added importance of protecting both public health and the right to vote during a deadly pandemic that has already taken more than 14,000 lives in our state.

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New Jersey's efforts to expand participation through vote by mail have been ongoing for years and have proven successful in election after election, just as it did, I might add, last month when we had the second-highest primary turnout in state history, despite an ongoing public health emergency and by the way, despite a non-competitive -- at that point in July -- race for the Presidency in our party. Let me be clear: vote by mail in this election will keep people safe, period. The Trump campaign is embarking on a brazen attempt to sow fear and confusion and to delegitimize our elections and cast doubt on our democratic process. They're trying to distract us from focusing on our future.

But we will not be distracted. Our plans for November will move forward. If vote by mail is good enough for the President, it is good enough for all of us. The sanctity of our democratic processes must be and will be preserved. As the President and his team try to delegitimize our election and impact the health and safety of millions of New Jerseyans, we will defend our rights vigorously and we will not back down. So as they say, bring it on.

Moving on, by the way, and completely unrelatedly because it was scheduled, I had a productive conversation this morning with the Chief Operating and Logistics Officer of the United States Postal Service, Dave Williams. He's a guy I've mentioned at this podium before. Obviously I went through not only our lessons learned from the July primary, but the tweaks to that model that we will employ in the November election. We had a good exchange. Dave was joined by a couple of his colleagues, and we were very clear, I was very clear that we needed the Postal Service to come up big in this election. He promised cooperation. We had a good exchange and promised to keep in close touch. We already have one follow-up item that we're running down from that conversation, so more on that as it unfolds.

Moving on further, yesterday we updated the list of states from which travelers to New Jersey are being advised to observe a 14-day self-quarantine period. Alaska and Delaware had been added, making 33 states plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Again, just to remember, and Judy will correct me if I don't get this right, the states in this list have, over a seven-day rolling average, either more than 10 new cases of coronavirus per 100,000 residents, or a daily spot positivity greater than 10%. Visit if you could, you'll see at the bottom there, [covid19.nj.gov/travel](https://www.nj.gov/covid19/travel) for the complete list of states and to learn whether you should be self-quarantining. If you're arriving from one of these states, use your smartphone to fill out the Department of Health's travel survey which is available through that same page.

We continue to ask everyone to practice self-responsibility and good citizenship by complying with our travel advisories. This goes equally whether you are a visitor to our state or a New Jersey resident returning from one of these states.

Next, a reminder to all school districts that any resubmitted plans to begin the school year with all-remote learning must cite specific health and safety reasons for the change which district leaders must certify to, as well as a timeline to get to an in-person instruction. All districts must meet the same health and safety standards we reiterated for districts last week and in all the guidance that has been released over the past few months, and all plans must be reviewed by executive county superintendents, as well as by both the Departments of Education and the Departments of Health.

We promised we'd put a chart up, Judy, that you referred to the other day, which goes through the regions that, as you have broken them down and again, you've got essentially two in the North, two in the Central, and two in the South. I put this up for two reasons, other than promising that we would put it up.

Number one, it's not a new configuration. You all use this, you and Ed and Tina and colleagues use this for other communicable diseases and viruses, so this configuration is one that the Department of Health is used to.

Secondly and Dave, I want to pick up on something that I meant to say in my answer to your good question the other day, can't you take this model and apply it to other realities? And I left out probably the most important part of that answer is, if you and I are in Bergen County, or maybe in this case, in Monmouth County and the environment which, in a hypothetical case, was not conducive to our dining, you and I could get into a car and drive up to Bergen County and have dinner. That's not the case with the school. You've got to go to the school where you're enrolled in overwhelmingly cases where you live, or near where you live. And so it is a

very different dynamic. The decision on dining and other indoor activities has to be taken on a statewide basis, and that's the point that I wanted to make the other day. You don't have that luxury in schools. Most kids go to the schools near where they live, and that's why the regional breakdown matters so much.

Okay, let's move on, Dan. Next, a quick note that the window for owners of residential properties with between 3 and 10 rental units to apply for the New Jersey Housing Mortgage and Finance Agency's Small Landlord Emergency Grant Program is now open, so go to njhousing.gov for more information and to apply. The window closes next Wednesday, August 26th at 1:00 p.m.

Finally I've got to make a clarification, Pat, of something that we talked about on Monday. I want to note that the bar Headliners is located in Neptune Township and not Neptune City, and I apologize to Neptune City Mayor Andrew Wardell for the mix-up, he was very kind to, and graciously I might add, to have pointed that out.

But separately, our team has spoken and has been back and forth with Neptune Township Mayor Rob Lane and can report that Township officials there are well aware of the concerns over the lack of social distancing and masking among Headliners' patrons and are cooperating with us as great partners to get things right, and I want to thank Mayor Lane for that. Unrelated to all of this, he and I had a good exchange yesterday. He had a couple of business openings in town and a lot of really good momentum in commerce, which we're desperately in need of.

So next, with that, let's look at today's numbers. We're reporting an additional 399 positive cases, a cumulative total of 188,427 since March 4th. Daily positivity, Judy, for August 15th, under 2% again, 1.78%. That is the sixth day in a row under 2%. Let's hope it stays that way. Statewide rate of transmission is about where it's been, 1.06; it was 1.05 yesterday and 1.03 the day before.

In our hospitals, we had 262 COVID-19 positive, 219 persons under investigation pending the return of their tests, for a total of 471. Of that amount, 92 were in intensive care, 32 ventilators were in use. And today, sadly, we must report another 11 deaths that are now confirmed from COVID-19 related complications, 6 of these 11 occurred across the previous five days. That brings, as you can see, our statewide total of confirmed fatalities to 14,097, and the count of probable deaths has been refined to 1,829.

In our hospitals, again as we say every day of light, at the risk of confusing apples and oranges, in hospitals yesterday there were seven reported deaths. Again, those are not yet lab confirmed. Those are not therefore in those numbers, but that's to give you a sense of what the spot reality looks like. Let's take a moment, as we do every day, to remember a few of those lives who we have lost.

We'll begin today in Watchung, the home for the past 50 years of artist, author and businessman Norman Gulamerian. Norman was 92 years old. He was born and raised in Brooklyn, and was studying art at what is today the noted LaGuardia High School of Music and Art in the Performing Arts when his artistic career took a detour because of World War II. With his parent's permission, because he was only 17 at the time, he enlisted in the Navy before graduating. He served as a mine tender on the Minelayer USS Monadnock.

When he returned home, he got his high school diploma and continued his studies at the new school. But a desire to source a higher grade linen canvas for himself and fellow artists led him, along with his brother, to found the company that is today Utrecht Art Supply. Over the years, as the company grew, Norman would also write what would become a widely used textbook on the principles of art appreciation and creation, called *A Language of a Work of Art*. And he met the loves of his life in a young widow named Mary and her five children.

He and Mary married in 1969, and the family then moved to Watchung. The rest, as they say, is history. Mary sadly passed in 2019 and Norman was also predeceased by his son Christopher, who passed in a car accident. He leaves his remaining children Becca, Seth, Eve and Jenny, and I had the great honor of speaking with both Eve and Jenny together on Monday, and their spouses, along with his five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. May Norman be fondly remembered. We thank him for his service to our nation, and may God bless and watch over him and his extraordinary family.

Next up, we remember Tony Whalen of Bridgewater. Born in Edison and a graduate of St. Joe's High School in Metuchen, Tony earned his degrees in political science and Spanish with a minor in international studies at Rider University, and then went on to earn his master's in business administration and technology from the University of Phoenix. For the past 17 years, he worked in the Bridgewater offices of the pharma company which has got a huge presence in New Jersey, Sanofi, rising to be Director of Client Engagement Services.

But Tony's legacy will be in his selfless community service. He was known as the neighbor who would always lend a hand, generous and outgoing. He was a member of the Free and Accepted Masonic Union Lodge 19, of the Scottish Rite of the Valley of Central Jersey, and was Den Leader in Cub Scout Pack 154. He was also President of the alumni and volunteer corporation for the Zeta Chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon at Rider University, a fraternity he cofounded.

This is the most important and devastating part of the story. Tony was only 45 years old when he passed away, leaving his wife of 20 years Laura, and their two children Magie who is 15 and Kai who is 11. By the way, each of whom, mom and two children, contracted COVID-19 and thank God have since recovered. Laura spent a considerable amount of time in the hospital. Tony is also survived by his mother who is heartbroken, Betty, and stepfather Frank, his brother Thomas and sister-in-law Suzanne, his mother-in-law Eileen and brothers-in-law Tim and Bill, along with four nieces. I spoke with Laura on Monday and you can imagine what that family's going through. Tony accomplished so much in his short time and there was so much more he could, and assuredly would, have done. May God bless and watch over him and his family.

And finally today, we recall Nelcie Williams. Nelcie was 89 years old. A native of Virginia, Nelcie came to New Jersey in 1949 as a member of the US Women's Army Corps, and was honorably discharged as a First Lieutenant from Camp Kilmer near New Brunswick in December of 1953. And at the time, she was the youngest commissioned WAC officer. She earned the National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal with loops, and was even a model for the US WAC military attire when she was stationed in Japan.

Nelcie met her husband Frank during a softball game at Fort Dix, and they were married at Camp Kilmer in April of 1954. Frank sadly passed in 2003, just two days after their 49th anniversary. Throughout her life, Nelcie worked with and for the New Jersey Bell at the Raritan Arsenal in Edison, and finished her career with her retirement from the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. Nelcie took a special delight in traveling, literally crisscrossing the world, but when she was at home, her time was dedicated to her family and her church. She is now reunited with her beloved Frank and with their son, Frank Jr, who she had lost.

Nelcie leaves her three daughters, Sharon, Pat – and I had the great honor of speaking separately to each of Sharon and Pat – and Shirley. She leaves grandchildren Jordan, Jeffrey, Justin, Jeremy and Janelle, and great-grandchild Isaiah. She also leaves her sister Bertha and numerous nieces, nephews and so many others. You know, not to get into the details, but Sharon had a real health challenge beginning about 10 years ago and Nelcie, at the ripe age of 79 and 80, jumped in as her caregiver and was relentless. God bless her. We thank Nelcie for her service to our nation and to her community. Hers was a life well-lived. God bless you, Nelcie, and God bless and watch over your family.

Three more blessed members of our New Jersey family gone because of this virus. We must continue to do everything possible to slow the spread of this virus and save every life possible. Tony could have been anyone's father or brother, Norman and Nelcie could have been anyone's parents or grandparents. These are not abstract stories. These are real people and real lives lived and lost. Let's heed their call and their warning that no one is invincible.

Next up, as we've been doing of late, I want to highlight another of the many small businesses whose futures in these uncertain times have been made a little bit more certain because of the partnerships being formed with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. Today the spotlight is on the River Edge-based health technology company, Inquisit Health, founded by Dr. Ashwin Patel on the left and Brijesh Patel on the right. Inquisit Health trains patients who have successfully battled a chronic condition to serve as peer mentors for those fighting the same condition, and their innovative platform helps health plans and health systems address the social determinants of health and promote healthy lifestyles. Inquisit Health's peer mentors improve patient morale, and along with it, patient outcomes.

Through EDA's equally innovative New Jersey Entrepreneur Support Program, Inquisit Health was able to secure capital guarantees amounting to \$200,000 to support \$250,000 in new investments made in the company. With this, Inquisit Health is going to be able to keep helping improve our entire healthcare delivery system. This isn't, by the way, also Inquisit Health's first time partnering with the EDA, as Dr. Patel previously participated in a New Jersey Founders and Funders Event, obtained a \$250,000 convertible note through the EDA's New Jersey Covest Fund, and has also attracted investors through our Angel Investor Tax Credit Program. Inquisit Health is proof that smart policy can not only help make us the unrivaled home for innovative startups, but that it can also help these companies through the most unprecedented challenges. So to Ashwin, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Monday and we share a legacy of the Wharton School, to Brijesh on the right, and Inquisit Health's eight employees, congratulations on your success and I can't wait to see your continued growth

Judy, you'd want me to say this. Before I close, I want to recognize yesterday's commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment which gave women the right to vote. Or, by the way, in the case of New Jersey, restored women's right to vote, as our original State Constitution in 1776 allowed women landowners the same right to vote as men, and at least 163 women have been documented as having voted before the Legislature stripped women of the right altogether in 1807. Some of our state's greatest daughters played roles in the passage of the 19th Amendment, among them, and we'll highlight only two but we could highlight many, on the left Mont Laurel's Alice Paul, and on the right the Reverend Florence Spearing Randolph of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Summit. Many more marched and protested, circulated petitions and led the fight for several statewide referenda.

The fight for full equality in our nation is a never-ending one but from time to time, we must stop and acknowledge and celebrate the moments in which meaningful change occurred, and yesterday was one of those days. And in this, the most important election year, it is a perfectly timed celebration.

And on a different note, it's 100th Anniversary for a bunch of important things. I want to acknowledge that this year is the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Negro National League, the first successful league that gave Black ballplayers the chance to play professional baseball at a time when the Major Leagues were still segregated. And New Jersey, by the way, played a leading role in the history of Black baseball. One of the first teams to play alongside the NNL was the Bacharach Giants of Atlantic City, named for then Mayor Bacharach, and we were also home to the storied Newark Eagles, for whom seven, by the way, Hall of Fame Greats played, including mortals like Monty Ervin and Larry Doby, before they were granted the right to play alongside their white peers in the majors.

And I have to give a big shout out to Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, to Congressman Bill Pascrell, by the way, who I had a great conversation yesterday, he continues to get stronger by the day, and all the work they're doing to restore Hinchcliffe Stadium in Paterson. It is a monumental project, but it's one that's received, rightfully, an enormous amount of attention. It's one of, Dan, if not the last remaining Negro League stadiums left in the United States, so hats off to them.

No one knows how the history of baseball would have changed had African American players never been shut out of the major leagues, and that's a shame, but the Negro Leagues are an integral part of the history of our national pastime and they more than deserve to be remembered. And these are both high points on which to close today.

So to everybody, we're not done with this fight yet. Keep social distancing, keep wearing your masks, keep being smart and using common sense. You've been extraordinary. Keep it up, and by doing so will win this together. 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 as flu season and COVID-19 literally collide this year, the CDC has warned us that this may be the most difficult fall and winter flu season that we have ever experienced. Since COVID-19 will likely be circulating during this year's flu season, getting a flu vaccine this fall will be more important than ever. Getting a flu vaccine will not protect you against COVID-19, however the vaccine can reduce flu illnesses and hospitalizations. This can also help to conserve potentially scarce healthcare resources during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Influenza and COVID-19 share many symptoms. Preventing influenza means fewer people will seek medical care and testing for possible COVID-19 or influenza. The CDC and the Department of Health recommend everyone six months of age and older receive a flu vaccine every year. Getting a yearly flu vaccine helps to protect you and those around you who are maybe more vulnerable to serious flu illnesses, such as infants and young children, older adults, and people with chronic conditions.

In New Jersey, flu vaccination has been required since 2008 for children attending daycare and preschool. Last January, Governor Murphy signed a bill into law requiring this year, for the first time, that employees in licensed nursing homes, home health agencies, acute care and specialty hospitals, long-term care acute care hospitals, or inpatient rehab hospitals and inpatient psychiatric hospitals get a flu shot. Healthcare facilities are required to begin offering flu vaccination by October and employees are required to be vaccinated by December 31st.

There is a medical exemption for those who have a medical reason. A mask would be required for any healthcare worker who cannot get a flu shot. These healthcare facilities are also required to provide education to their staffs about why this is so important, especially this year, to get a flu shot to protect their patients or residents, themselves and their families, and their communities. We know our healthcare workers are committed to doing everything they can to protect their patients and residents, and this new requirement is another important way they can protect not only their patients and residents, but themselves and their families and their loved ones.

To help prepare for the 2020-2021 flu season, New Jersey has been allocated a larger number of flu vaccine doses. Low or no-cost flu vaccinations will be available through your local health department's federally qualified health centers and several nonprofit organizations. Through our New Jersey Vaccines for Children Program, the Department also ensures that private providers can offer no or low-cost flu and other vaccines for children who are Medicaid eligible, uninsured, or underinsured.

The CDC has provided guidance on how best to administer vaccines safely during a pandemic. These measures include screening persons for symptoms of COVID-19 and contact with persons with possible COVID-19 prior to and upon arrival, ensuring that all staff and patients wear face coverings, reducing crowding in waiting areas, and keeping people at least six feet apart. Individuals should check with their local health department or other healthcare providers to see what they have implemented to keep residents safe during their vaccination. The best time to get vaccinated is early fall. Getting vaccinated later, however, can still be beneficial, and vaccinations should continue to be offered throughout the flu season, even into January or later.

Flu vaccine also has been shown to save children's lives, prevent serious events associated with chronic lung disease, diabetes and heart disease, and prevent flu-related hospitalizations among adults and older adults. During the 2019-2020 flu season two children died from the flu; 56 children experienced severe illness. There were 120 respiratory outbreaks in our long-term care facilities. Our hospital saw many patients, some with severe illness, during the most recent flu season. There were over 24,000 emergency room visits for the flu, approximately 4,000 discharges, 529 intensive care admissions, and 117 patients on ventilators.

About 48% of our residents six months and older get the flu vaccination, according to the most recent data that we have. This year, we simply must do better: our lives depend on it. We are asking residents to ensure they receive the flu vaccination this year and help minimize the stress on the healthcare system as these two illnesses coincide. Making sure individuals are up to date on recommended vaccines is an important step in keeping all of our communities, especially the most vulnerable, protected. For more information, visit our website nj.gov/health/fightthefluNJ.

The Governor shared our daily report, 471 hospitalizations, only 92 individuals in critical care, and only 34% of them on ventilators. Thankfully, no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. Our total remains at 55.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 54.1, Black 18.4, Hispanic 20.2, Asian 5.5, and other 1.8. Of the 11 deaths we are reporting today, they all occurred in either July or August.

The state veterans homes are reporting one new positive case of an employee in Menlo Park, who subsequently tested negative after a positive result. Another repeat test is pending, to determine if it was a false positive. Our psychiatric hospitals, the numbers remain the same.

The daily percent positivity as of August 15th statewide is 1.78. The Northern part of the state reports 1.47; the Central part of the state 1.42, and the Southern part of the state 2.52. That concludes my update. Stay safe, and remember for each other, for us all, answer the call. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, several things. First of all, thank you. As we discussed, you, Pat and I discussed earlier, when we talked through your commenting about the flu, it was in the category of folks, remember, life goes on.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: That's right.

Governor Phil Murphy: Right? So as bad as COVID-19 is, there's other stuff we have to deal with. I'm giving a budget address on Tuesday, among other things, so there's, the Democrats have a convention this week, the Republicans next week, there's a Presidential election in November, all these minor pesky things going on at the same time. So thank you for reminding us of that.

Secondly, positivity rate, as low as it is and with the high number and if you look and eyeball this over the past five days, say averaging about 400 positives. One takeaway people should take that we've got big testing capacity in New Jersey. So for all the challenges on the labs returning stuff, results on time, the fact of the matter is with as low a positivity rate as we have, with multiple hundreds of positives, the conclusions I draw are we're keeping our arms around this. We're not out of the woods yet, but we're testing a lot of people.

Let me ask you and Ed a question. We've been at 55 cases of the inflammatory syndrome now for many days, I've got at least seven in front of me, I think it's longer than that. Can we draw any conclusions about whether or not that's in our rearview mirror, or any insight into that?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: I don't think we can say it's in our rearview mirror. I think that it's a couple of reasons. First, there were many more cases earlier in the disease so obviously, there'd be more cases of MIS as well, plus as it was a new syndrome, there was a backlog. So when we first began hearing about it, you heard about or thought about children who might have been ill two, three, four weeks beforehand. Now we've caught up with all that, we have fewer cases overall. So as they happen, we should be hearing about them faster and luckily, not very many.

Governor Phil Murphy: And by the way, still we must remind, I knock on wood every time we say this, no fatalities associated with that. Please God it stays that way. And as we say almost every day, thank you for reminding us of the awful inequities, particularly across racial lines, whether it's in the inflammatory syndrome, the fatalities, the sicknesses of the entire disease.

Pat, I just got literally a picture that they've not verified yet but we had some incredibly nasty weather this morning and I got a picture from a dear friend that appears to have been a tornado, or at least a funnel cloud, in and around Deal in my county of Monmouth. Has that passed through? Any update on the Atlantic disturbances and any other compliance or other updates? Thank you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. As far as compliance goes, since we've last met there's been three separate instances. Lakeside Diner in Lacey Township was cited once again, and I know the Ocean County authorities are continuing to work with the courts to enforce that order. In Irvington, the B2 Sports Lounge was cited for having indoor dining, and in Jefferson, Top Shelf Fitness was cited once again, another establishment that's been cited several times, and as with other establishments in that position, the options are being explored to further enforce that order.

With regard, I saw those pictures as well, I think it was Lincrot and Deal in that Monmouth County area. Our OEM staff are working with the National Weather Service to confirm that and we continue to monitor those two storms off the Atlantic, so we'll probably have a little bit more on trajectory and estimated path, probably within the next day or so, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. Dan Bryan, who wishes he was 24, tomorrow we are virtual and Friday will be, unless you all hear otherwise, we'll be together at one o'clock in this room. I'll say this for my party. I don't mean this as politics as much as, you know, we're in the new normal and the Democrats are halfway through their convention. I think it's been a great couple of days, a couple of days more to go. And the Republicans will kick off, I believe, on Monday with their convention. And this is the new normal. Who would have ever thunk six months ago we'd be watching a virtual convention of either party, but that's what we're going to be doing. And again, I think, so far, so good.

And so with that, we have a lot of folks here today so if you could be economical, you'd be doing us a favor. Elise, we're going to start with you. Good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. Two questions on gyms. Do you expect that orders on indoor dining and gyms will happen at the same time? Also, is there a chance that gym openings will allow certain activities but not others? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: If I had to guess, Elise, and I'm not making news, but as I've said many times of late, we're trying to get to yes. I would guess if I had to that they would not be at the same time, and for the simple reason, being able to functionally wear face coverings at all times versus not at all times is a fairly significant bright line on indoor activities. That's not to say we're not going to get to both, I hope sooner than later, but that's what I would guess.

And yes, I could see that. I think mostly on gyms it will be capacity, spacing, face coverings heavy. I'm not sure it will be distinguishing activities but it may well, so if you could bear with us on that. And again, we're hoping to get to both sooner than later.

Again, to reiterate, we had a very good, and I would say overwhelmingly responsible call with hundreds of gym owners on Friday, our teams did, and it went well and we respect obviously their industry and the pain they're going through. We want to get there, so thank you.

Dustin, I think we'll go back to you, if that's all right with you. Good afternoon.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. Colonel, can you clarify on the Lakeside Diner, is that the second time this week, and third overall that they've been cited?

The Health Commissioner said Monday that the agency allocated more than \$37 million in federal funds to support case investigation, contact tracers and information technology. Can you clarify that money is strictly for those specific programs or is discretionary?

On Monday, lawyers for Christopher Neuwirth filed a legal notice demanding that you, Governor, publicly apologize for comments about his employment and firing, saying the comments and leaked information from your administration were false and defamatory. Any comments on that? And will you apologize?

Last, the New Jersey Restaurant and Hospitality Association says it's been trying for two months to meet with you to discuss plans to safely reopen limited indoor dining, but have been declined repeatedly, and that members of your staff said indoor dining is a luxury. Do you think it's a luxury? Why have you not met with the association, and are you willing to sit down with its leadership? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, do you want to take the first one on Lakeside Diner? That has come up multiple times here.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Yes, sir. I do believe that was the second time this week, Dustin, but there has been, I would say probably more than five since the Executive Order was issued. And if I'm not mistaken, I don't know if Matt knows or not, but I think there was also from the Department of Health an order issued to close beyond the Executive Order violations which Lakeside Diner is also in violation of, and that's what Ocean County authorities are working through right now. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: My pleasure. Judy, on the second question, Dustin, could you give us that one again, of Judy?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Yeah, the Commissioner said Monday that the agency had allocated more than \$37 million in federal funds for case investigation, contact tracing. Just seeking clarity if that money is specifically for those programs or if it's discretionary?

Governor Phil Murphy: Could we get back to you on that? Is that okay? Nothing new to add on Chris Neuwirth or any other personnel matter, so nothing to add there. Listen, Mary Lou Halverson reached out to me this morning and sent me a text. That's the first text I've gotten from her and if she sees it differently, she's welcome to correct the record, but I can't recall having received a text from her, I'm not sure ever, but I can't recall for a long time. So with all due respect, no request for a meeting from either her or someone else has come to me from the Restaurant Association. I deal and speak with owners of restaurants literally all the time, many of whom are good friends of ours. Our teams are in constant communication with the Restaurant Association, including Mary Lou and her colleagues and that's the way it should be. We're literally in constant communication, just as we are, as I mentioned a minute ago, with gym owners, and we don't view them as a luxury.

It is a different reality as compared to going to school, so let's all accept that. Going to school is existential. Eating out is not at the level of going to school, but we have a huge, vibrant, among the most impressive restaurant industries of any American state, and we wear that as a badge of honor and we want them to be healthy and doing well, and I think they've done a very good job and we've been extremely supportive of outdoor dining, but indoor dining is harder. I mean, we've said it 50 or 100 times here.

But I've said to Mary Lou this morning, we respect her, we respect her organization. We'll meet, whether it's me or our team, and we're always willing to meet and happy to meet. Let's go to Nikita and then we'll come back down front to Dave.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Hi, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Nikita.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: So first off, I just want to know, what was your initial reaction when you heard about the Trump lawsuit?

And then secondly, this morning, Deputy Attorney General representing the Passaic County Board of Elections took the position that the state should put monitors inside candidates' campaign headquarters, and quote, "Follow their campaign workers around to make sure there's no misdoing." end quote. This was before a judge in a hearing about a new election in Paterson, Deputy Attorney General George Cohen also said, let the campaigns pay for the campaign monitors and let them sit at the campaign offices to make sure no one's going out and collecting 5, 10 or 500 ballots at a time.

Do you share the position on the campaign monitors? And do you think there are any circumstances that warrant government monitors overseeing candidates from inside the campaign headquarters or from those monitors following around campaign workers?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? Nothing to add, I'm going to disappoint you today. Nothing to add on your first question. I think I've been pretty clear how I feel about vote by mail and democracy and my comments earlier. I don't believe, unless Matt Platkin is with us, corrects the record, I don't think that's us in terms of this monitoring question you've asked about. Matt, anything to add there?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: The State's not a party, he wasn't representing the state. I haven't seen the comments but that's not a position that the State has taken.

Governor Phil Murphy: Please.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Sure, that being the case that this is still a Deputy Attorney General and you're still the Governor of New Jersey, do you think that campaign monitors –

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for clarifying that latter point. That's a relief, Pat. I literally have nothing, I have no insight. If we get some insight we'll come back to you, but I don't have any insight for you. Thank you. Was it specific to Paterson, by the way?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Yeah, this was in a hearing about a new election in Paterson, where the DAG requested campaign monitors.

Governor Phil Murphy: Can we come back to you?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Yeah.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, thank you. I'll come back down to Dave, is that all right?

Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today: Hi, Governor. A question for the health folks, great topic, by the way. Will there be enough influenza vaccine available, do we think this year? Especially if there's a rush for people to get flu shots? When should people get the flu shot? Should they get it now if it's available? There's some talk about it may not last longer than a certain number of months. Would it be better to wait until October or November?

On average, how many COVID tests are being given every day now in New Jersey? Are we still trying to ramp up the number of testing facilities that we have or do we have enough? What's the current lag time in getting test results back? Is this still an issue?

And finally, last question, a couple of weeks ago we were talking, Governor, about, you know, how people were not responding to inquiries from contact tracers. If possible, can we review? If you get a call from somebody who says they're a contact tracer, what specifically are they going to ask you? Will they ask you your address? Will they request your social security number? Any other personal information, perhaps the combination to your safe? Will they be calling from a certain area code? Will they leave a message if you don't answer the phone, because a lot of people if they don't recognize the number they won't answer. And what's the best way to figure out, let's remind people perhaps, what's the best way for people to figure out if these contact tracers are who they say they are? And why is it so important to respond to them? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me start with the last question, Dave, if I can. We've put the questions up before I'm very happy, Dan, either to get them to Dave privately or actually, it may not be a bad idea to put them up on a slide for everybody, Judy, to see again, because they're very basic questions and they do not include anything related to proprietary information. So they do not include, I know, social security or bank accounts. I know those are the two examples that we always use, and we would overwhelmingly, because there's no proprietary information, overwhelmingly ask people to take the call and cooperate. But with your blessing we'll either get it to you privately, or I actually think we should throw it up on the screen because it's very to the point and very innocuous and it's not to repeat something was said many other times of late, it's not a witch hunt so we don't condone any underage drinking or illegal activities but that's not what this is about.

Tests today, we're running regularly in the 20,000 to 30,000 range to the right. And do we think we have the capacity? We always want more. We've shown, this may be another slide worth bringing up at some point soon is we've got sort of clusters of groups of people in hierarchy, vulnerable communities, frontline workers, symptomatic, everyday people just to pick four categories. Everyday asymptomatic, but boy, to be able to have capacity at the point of attack at a school. We were out at the White House on Monday or sorry, yesterday. Was it yesterday? Talking about long-term care facilities and getting more testing equipment, Pat, to those facilities. I think we can always take more.

I continue to believe, based on everything I know, this is ultimately going, I don't know when, but it will ultimately get to the point of what we think of as a pregnancy test where you can go in, eventually, I don't know when this is and buy it and do it yourself. We're not there yet. We still have enormous testing constraint. The flare ups around the country have put a huge strain on our testing supplies and reagents. I would turn it over to you, Judy, either both on anything on testing turnaround times or anything you want to add on testing generally, and then vaccine availability and when you should get the flu shot.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Okay, on testing, we have maintained between 20,000 and 25,000 as high as 36,000 a day since the beginning of June. We have run about 2.5 million tests in New Jersey, it's some of the highest in the United States. Turnaround time, thankfully, is improving. All the commercial labs now are, the majority of the commercial labs are below three days; two of the larger labs, who have had struggles with backlogs are a median of four days at this point. Their average, seven-day average, is about five days, but that's coming down.

Governor Phil Murphy: How about flu shots and influenza and capacity?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: This year, it's expected that they're going to be close to 200 million flu shots available in the United States. That's the most that's ever been produced. Yes, as the Commissioner said very clearly, 100% I encourage people to go out and get the shot. As to when to get it, typically sometime about two to three weeks from now, once we begin to get into September or so is when we begin to recommend it, but don't wait too long.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. Dave, Thank you. Sir, do you have anything? You good?

Ian Elliott, NJTV News: I have questions from my colleagues in NJTV. The President's lawsuit calls Executive Order 177 a, quote, "brazen power grab" and says that the Legislature can change election law and not the Governor, COVID-19 notwithstanding. An op-ed cites an NJ Spotlight report that 10% of ballots cast in the primary were tossed and says that voters could be deprived of the right to vote. Both cite Paterson as evidence of voter fraud in New Jersey. How do you respond to that?

Second, how do you respond to Republicans who say if the Governor is okay with people standing in line at the MVC or at big box stores, why not at polling places?

Third, what has your administration done to look into the allegations brought to light through a whistleblower about unsafe COVID-19 practices at the New Jersey National Guard?

And finally, in the post-George Floyd world, protesters have demanded that the system holds police officers accountable for misconduct, and a big part of that for Newark CCRB was the power to subpoena officials and compel answers. What do you think of the State Supreme Court taking away those powers?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, I've got nothing more to add on the Trump lawsuit. As I mentioned earlier, the Trump campaign lawsuit, pardon me. I apologize. I'm not sure I understood the NJ Spotlight question. Could you hit that again?

Ian Elliott, NJTV News: Sorry. They said that the Legislature can change the law and not the Governor, and the op-ed states that 10% of ballots cast in the primary were tossed and says that voters could be deprived of the right to vote and they both –

Governor Phil Murphy: Voters could be what, sorry?

Ian Elliott, NJTV News: Deprived of the right to vote. And both cite Paterson as evidence for that.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm sorry, and what?

Ian Elliott, NJTV News: And both cite Paterson as evidence for voter fraud in New Jersey.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I don't know about this 10% wasn't counted. That's the first I've heard about that. But Patterson, I would just say this as forcefully as I can. Paterson was not part of our primary. Paterson was a local election on May 12th and took place before the primary. To me, overwhelmingly, I think to our teams, overwhelmingly, it is a positive data point. People tried to screw with the system, they got caught, they've been indicted, and if they're convicted, they'll pay a price. To me, that's the way – that's the system working.

Republicans are okay with long lines at Motor Vehicles and not long lines at polling places. Is that what your question is and how do I react to that? I react to the fact that the Motor Vehicles Commission was shut for months, it had a tsunami of backlog. We have overwhelmingly encouraged people to go online to do their MVC work. The good news is, gobs of people have done that. That doesn't mean you still don't have a lot of people who have no choice but to go in person. And by the way, this just in for our Republican brothers and sisters, that's a hybrid model, right? So you can either go in person or you can do it in a virtual sense, in a non in-person way. This just in, that's what we're doing with voting. So you can still vote in person. God bless you. We're going to have at least 50% capacity. Every municipality, at least one location, but we're also giving folks the opportunity to vote by mail and not just return your ballot by mail, to drop it in secure lockboxes, to hand it to a poll worker on Election Day, or to put it in the mail. For the life of me I don't understand what the challenge is with that.

Whistleblower, National Guard, I've got no news on that front. I know that this came up, Dave I think brought up some pictures a couple of weeks ago and well I'll get Dan Bryan to follow up if we've got anything new on that. I do not.

And again, I'm sorry, George Floyd. After his murder or his killing, your question was police conduct?

Ian Elliott, NJTV News: Yeah, a big part of police misconduct was Newark CCRB empowered to subpoena officers and compel officers.

Governor Phil Murphy: I saw the headlines of the decision. I don't have an insight into that, so forgive me, we'll get back to you. I just literally saw that that decision came down this morning, and I'll come back to you on that. I think, listen, this is a state that prides itself on strong, and Pat embodies this, the Attorney General embodies this, on strong and deepening relationships between law enforcement and community, whether it's faith community leaders, activists, whatever it might be. And we saw an extraordinary show of both passion, anger and responsibility on all sides in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and Ahmad Aubrey and others on the list of names that sadly goes on and on. You had a modicum of arrests in bad behavior in our state, and you saw overwhelmingly examples of finding common ground.

And listen, I'm presenting a budget on Tuesday, and we hope in these dire times, where we have to solve for incredibly challenging math, which is unavoidable, that we'll also at the same time be able to make statements about addressing those inequities. As we've said many times, Judy, COVID-19 didn't create them or start them. Sadly, it didn't start with George Floyd's killing. But all of this has laid these inequities bare. To me, it's not just words in how you behave as leaders, but it's where you choose to put your resources, and that's what we're committed to doing. You good, sir? Alex, how are you?

Alex Napoliello, NJ.com: All right, good afternoon, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon.

Alex Napoliello, NJ.com: I wanted to ask what steps your administration will be taking to make sure that mail-in ballots are not intercepted or harvested when they're actually being delivered to people? We saw that in Paterson, we saw it elsewhere, ballots that were left at apartment complexes and people could have picked up a few dozen, a few hundred ballots in one clip.

You say that in the November election, at least one polling place per municipality will have to be open. Can municipalities or county clerks open more than one polling place if they choose to?

And the President lastly tweeted, all caps, "IF YOU CAN PROTEST IN PERSON YOU CAN VOTE IN PERSON." I wanted to get your reaction to that and I know you're going to say that you protest outside and vote inside, but have you given consideration to opening outdoor polling places? Somerset County did this during the primary.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the last one, I wouldn't be opposed to it. I mean, the county clerks, who do a very good job in the state at the county level, that's a decision that they would make in concert with our engagement with Secretary of State and the Division of Elections, and I would not be opposed to that. I'll go one up unless Matt Platkin corrects me, so our objectives are minimum of one location per municipality and 50% capacity per county. If a municipality wanted to do more than one and that worked with the county's overall plans, I don't personally see any reason to be opposed to that.

And listen, I don't know that I've got much more to add on Patterson. It wasn't in the primary. It was a local election. Some guys tried to mess with the system. They got caught. They got indicted. And if they get convicted, everyone is obviously innocent until proven guilty in this country, they'll pay a price for that.

I didn't mention this in some answers lately, but there's a pretty rigorous – more than pretty rigorous, there's a rigorous matching of signatures. So this notion that you can just pick up a bunch of ballots and start filling them out and have no trace back to the registered voter, that just doesn't happen. In fact, in some cases, the opposite happens. Signatures are called into question. You might have had the signature when you were 18 years old and now you're 88 years old, and your penmanship has changed and you know, we've had situations like that. The system is pretty darn rigorous.

Now, the good news is there is a system for you to challenge within the parameters to actually claim that that is my signature and if that's validated, we'll work with you. But the fact of the matter is this notion that you can back a truck up with a bunch of ballots when you're tying each one back to an individual registered voter with an on-file signature. It's part of talking points. It's part of myths that people develop. That's not the reality of what happens.

I'm not suggesting, and we were frank about this, we were very tough on the Postal Service. I think, Nikita to your credit, you raised this question of ballots sitting in lobbies and Matt and I went at the Postal Service and we'll continue to go at them. That's unacceptable. But the link between that pile, if it exists, and please got it doesn't or if it does, it doesn't happen often, and then returning those fraudulently to vote, that's a link that people are making, particularly who want to gin up this fear in us that just doesn't -- there's no evidence that that exists. But thank you. Daniel.

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Hi, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: How are you?

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Good, thank you. Three questions. So first, following up on the questions on the --

Governor Phil Murphy: Do you have more on Patterson vote fraud or no? That was a joke, Daniel. Please.

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Following up on the questions of reopening, it seems NJBIA and Chamber of Commerce seem to argue that if NJSIAA and the school districts can use their own insight and judgment to determine if they can reopen, then why couldn't indoor dining and gyms?

Second question that we've been hearing from a lot of readers that they don't feel like there's enough worker protections, especially during phase two and the EO violation complaint form, it's just kind of, the complaints go down a black hole.

Governor Phil Murphy: Worker protection like PPE?

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: PPE, sick days, things like that. They worry that since OSHA is not really doing what the federal government would typically do that it falls to the state and it's going to local agencies and it's disorganized. Has any of this been brought to your attention? Do you have any thoughts on that? And lastly, do you think any of the state or county agencies have enough authority to enforce the protections or does the Legislature need to give it more teeth, or could you via executive action give it some teeth?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm missing that one, sorry. One more time?

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Which one?

Governor Phil Murphy: The last question.

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Do you think the state or county agencies have enough authority to enforce the protections, or does the Legislature need to give you more teeth?

Governor Phil Murphy: And which protection, sorry?

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: They're saying the worker, sort of OSHA workplace protection, inspections, PPE?

Governor Phil Murphy: On the third one? I'm not sure. I think we do but I would not be opposed to strengthening, and that may be at a federal level. OSHA is something that I've spent a lot of time with Congress and Donald Norcross going back and forth on. On that one, Matt, are you aware of any holes that we have that we could fill with legislation?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Yeah, typically OSHA in New Jersey would handle these types of workplace protection in private sector. We are considering a series of potential options with respect to strengthening the state enforcement power but you also have to remember there's a capacity issue as the Department of Labor does not typically enforce these types of protections in the private sector and they're also principally concerned right now with processing unemployment claims. So we're working on potential options here, along with the legislature. But we'll have to come back to you.

Governor Phil Murphy: So I'd say the punchline is we'd be open to it if we thought it made sense.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Sorry, Gov, just one clarification on that. The Executive Orders that the Governor has issued are enforced by our Division of Law and Public Safety. You're asking very specifically on OSHA-like complaints through private sector.

Governor Phil Murphy: And additional steps. Listen, I don't know how many times we've said it here. If you've got PPE, we'll take it. So are there examples of essential workers or folks in the workplace that need PPE that don't have a sufficient amount, which I think is your question? I would love to know offline what those are. Because we acknowledged as a general matter, we're not where we need to be. Can't hear you.

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: PPE or lack of social distancing or forced to come back into work, the PPE was just one example.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I mean, lack of social distancing, I mean, there's a process that we haven't talked about lately that we expect employers and institutions to abide by. I think we've long ago said covid19.nj.gov is a good place to go if you think that institution that you're either a customer of or a worker in is not doing their job, and there's basically a complaint page on there. But if you know of a specific situation, we'd love to know.

Listen, I respect NJBIA, the Chamber of Commerce. As I said, our belief is that public health creates economic health and we all want to get to economic health. What would be the rationale? What is the bizarre rationale that we could have that we would not want to get to gyms and indoor dining? Of course we want to get there. We have the responsibility to take those steps to limit, as best we can, folks who get infected, get sick and/or lose their lives. That's our sole objective.

We've got, as I said earlier to an earlier question, we've got one of the great restaurant associations, collection of restaurants in the United States. It's a badge of honor. We're trying to get this as right as we can. We believe if you jump the gun and go to economic health and don't take the proper steps on the public health side, you run the risk of it blowing up in your face. I mentioned this the other day, we all aspire to that economic health but you've got to see both sides of the equation.

I think it's crystal clear. You've seen flare ups in other states in this country and it's quite clear where those flare ups emanated from, and overwhelmingly they were indoor activities. Having said all that, to begin with, to come, as we go to Matt, where we started with Elise, we will get to gyms. We'll get to indoor dining, and I hope sooner than later. I'm not sure we're going to get there on the same day, but we're going to get there and I hope that that's sooner than later, but we're trying to do it as responsibly as we can. Thank you. Matt, you're going to take us home. Thank you.

Matt, they conveniently claim the microphone broke just as you're about to ask your --

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: No, you're good. A couple on schools, Governor. Have any school districts reopening plans that had been approved by the Department of Education to date, have any been rejected? What's the timeline exactly of schools submitting? They're scrambling to hold special meetings.

And also just finally on the schools, will you commit to posting these decisions and plans publicly?

And lastly, some states, including Pennsylvania, are signing on to President Trump's expanded unemployment order. I'm curious if New Jersey plans to be doing so as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yes, so we had an exchange this morning on this. We're looking very carefully on the third question on the unemployment expansion. I don't have any news for you today, but that's something that we're looking at with Rob Asaro Angelo, our Commissioner and our team. And again, this would be in the mode of some other states that have accepted, if you will, the \$300 extension without the state match itself, which we have said would be, you know, I think \$3.5 half billion for New Jersey.

I've asked for interim report. This is very fluid. We literally had a meeting on this, on the schools, before we came over here. I think we will commit, I'm not sure quote-unquote to posting it, but we will absolutely commit to giving you the status of the reports, who is full in-person, who's hybrid, who's remote, until what date? But it is still very fluid. It's actually going to be typically fluid on August 19th of any year, a couple of weeks ahead of the school year reopening, and it's particularly fluid given COVID. So the answer is yes, but I don't have that for you today.

I will say this. But again, we've given districts and I want to say this, remind everybody, we've given districts the opportunity to resubmit a plan if they had already submitted it before we gave them the flexibility to go remote to a certain date for various, as I mentioned in my remarks today, for very explicit reasons.

But recognizing we're still in that process where you've got some that are resubmitting, and you've got some that are still in the form of submitting their first report, I would say the overwhelming category right now of reports that are being submitted and reviewed are in the hybrid category. The second, but I'd say a significant amount behind right now at least, are remote until a certain date. And then there are I'd say a third group of collections which we would largely associate with fully back in person. But again, the numbers are moving around so much I don't want to hang my hat yet, because I want to give the districts and the Department of Education and Department of Health to get through the process a little bit more. So we'll come back to you when we feel comfortable to be able to put some meat on what I've just said.

Is that good with you, Judy? I think we're going to mask up, if that's all right. So, a couple of things again, we'll be virtual tomorrow. We'll be with you live here at one o'clock on Friday unless you hear otherwise. We wish, again as a Co-Chair of the convention, I wish the Democratic Convention continued success tonight and tomorrow night. Tonight, President Barack Obama, Vice President nominee, Senator Kamala Harris, Senator Elizabeth Warren, among other notable speakers.

As it relates to the general welfare of the state, I want to thank Judy and Ed as always, Pat, Jared, Matt, Dan, Happy Birthday, and the rest of the team and thank everybody for, it's not just the responsibility and doing the right thing and the patience, but it's also your willingness to understand that there has to be some flexibility in our world right now.

As I've said before to Matt's questions, this is not going to be a normal school year. The preparation of that school year is not normal. The school year itself will not be normal. The Democratic and Republican conventions are not a normal model. Our election in November will be different than it's been in other Novembers. Restaurants right now, main streets in our communities don't look the way they normally look. And I have to give overwhelming, there are real concerns. There's a real desire obviously on the part of the industry, whether it's gyms or restaurants to pick two, theaters, there's a desire on our part that they get to a safe and responsible place, sooner than later.

But that desire has been overwhelmingly, both by institutions and individuals, carried out with an acknowledgement that this is not normal, with an understanding of the need for flexibility, and with extraordinary responsibility. No American state can touch any of what I've just said. So to each and every one of you, thank you. God bless.

Governor Phil Murphy

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