



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Friday, August 21, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

Well, good afternoon, everybody. Nice to see everybody here. It is Friday, so we appreciate everyone joining us a little bit off-schedule. But there are definitely some topics we want to cover, as it pertains to COVID.

As a side note, some folks were asking me, as I was coming in, about Brayden Harrington, who was on at a national with the DNC Convention last night, which I thought was pretty awesome. I think it has eaten up a lot of people's social media feed in a really positive way. So it was great to see one of our own out there. I mean, I get nervous when I talk in front of this press conference, never mind going on national TV. So he did a fantastic job. That was really, really great to see.

A couple things to talk about; first on unemployment, we had some unemployment numbers come out yesterday. First is our seasonally adjusted rate. So what we put up here, a little different than usual, but as you can see this is where we were. Remember the good old days of 2.4% unemployment, lowest in the country, that was great, as we were entering March. And then, obviously the pandemic hit and the numbers really spiked as we put in the Stay-at-Home Order and a couple of the other provisions.

And then, again, we just got our numbers as of yesterday. If you look at the number of folks that are currently unemployed, about just under 48,000, compared to the pre-COVID labor force of about 780,000, that brings our unemployment rate to about 6.2% currently. So we are on a really, really good track, to say the least.

This is a slide that a lot of folks have seen before, as well, just showing in the blue line the average from the United States, in terms of how it has tracked since the beginning on unemployment, and then ourselves. So, again, we weren't tracking quite as well as the rest of the country, during kind of the peak, when the northeast was really inundated with a lot of COVID. But, as you can see, we're on a very aggressive track compared to the rest of the country. And that's a good sign. And so, we want to hopefully keep those trends continuing and getting folks back to work as fast as possible, creating opportunity not just for themselves and their families, but our economy, as we flex things open in a safe and healthy way.

The last graph we have here is another one that you've seen before. This is all 50 States. I know it's a little hard to see, when you're on television. The yellow line here, this is Massachusetts. The ones you see in red are the rest of the New England States. But, as you can see, in terms of the current unemployment rate, we're sitting at just about 6%, normally not a very good number. But, given everything we've gone through over the past few months, we've more than cut that in half, which is terrific.

Some of the other New England States not faring quite as well, given that they have higher density areas, they have some additional restrictions in place. But, again, clearly, in terms of where we are across the country, we're on account of the better half of it to say the least and we're trending very, very well.

So we just want to keep folks apprised of that. We get a lot of questions about where we are with unemployment, especially now that we're going into our phase with the \$300 stipend, which everybody in our unemployment system will be able to utilize. With that, let's maybe go into a Public Health update with Dr. Chan.

Dr. Chan:

Great, good afternoon, and happy Friday. So, the COVID numbers for New Hampshire continue to look good. But first, globally, there's now more than 22.7 million people that have been confirmed with COVID-19 infection globally. And that includes more than 5.5 million within the United States. Of those 5.5 million, more than 174,000 people within the United States have died from COVID-19. And in fact, the United States is averaging at about 1,000 people dying from COVID-19 per day. So this is certainly having and continues to have an impact globally and nationally.

Thankfully, the numbers in New Hampshire continue to show a positive trend, meaning a good trend. We are announcing an additional 24 new people with confirmed COVID-19 infection for New Hampshire for today. That brings the total to 7,071 total people confirmed with COVID-19.

There is one new hospitalization to report. And we are reporting a total now of 709 people that have been hospitalized with COVID-19 because of their illness. Now, this is a decrease from prior numbers, even though we're reporting one new case, because we've done some data checks and some quality checks on the data. And there were, I think, four people that we had previously reported as being hospitalized for COVID-19 that we have removed. So we are now at 709 total people that have required hospitalization for their illness with COVID-19.

And then, thankfully, zero new deaths to report today. However, we're still at, excuse me, 428 total people that have died, related to COVID-19 and the pandemic. We continue to see low but persistent community transmission in New Hampshire and throughout the region. The last one to two weeks, we've averaged about 20 new infections per day that we've reported out.

But our percent positivity rate for PCR-based tests remains less than 1%. That's been the case for about the last week. So that is good news, especially when other parts of the country are having test positivity rates on the order of 5%, 10%-plus. New Hampshire has been doing very well in this regard.

And our hospitalizations remain low. On any given day, there's anywhere between only 10 to 15 people hospitalized throughout the State with COVID-19. And those numbers continue to slowly trend down.

So COVID-19 is still out there. We believe community transmission is low. But it is still present. And so, we need people to continue to do their part and take the individual and collective responsibility for trying to prevent and control spread of COVID-19 within our communities by following the Public Health guidance around social distancing, cloth facemask use, frequent hand hygiene. And certainly if anybody has symptoms of COVID-19, please stay home and seek out testing. Thank you very much. I'm going to hand things over to the Commissioner.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Good afternoon. For a long-term care update today, effective today we are closing Greenbriar in Nashua's COVID-19 outbreak. So that's a big outbreak that we're very happy that we're able to close today. So that leaves one outstanding outbreak at Evergreen Place in Manchester. And that is still considered active. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Great. Thank you very much, Commissioner and Dr. Chan. A few things we want to touch upon, first just a little bit more on the data. We try to put this graph up every week, as this is just really mimicking a lot of what Dr. Chan was talking about. The blue line is our percent positivity, really one of the number 1 indicators, our gauging indicators, if you will. We want to see that continually trend either flat or down. It can't get much lower, frankly, when you're below 1%. That's a very, very good sign.

In white, you see the total number of tests that the State has conducted. And you can barely see it, but there's a little yellow tip there on the top of the white chart that shows the number of positive cases. And as was referenced, I think we're averaging just under 20 positive cases over the last week per day, which is, again, as good as we've had, and all good very positive stuff. It provides opportunity for the State. But we don't want to take it for granted. It's all about wearing our masks, social distancing, really maintaining a lot of those disciplines that we've had.

Along that path, our numbers are very, very good. We do have a couple significant events coming up that we want to keep very close eye on. As a reminder, Bike Week in Laconia is starting up this weekend, I believe, officially. We've been working closely with all those involved to review guidance documents and protocols. I think everyone feels that we're very cautiously optimistic that this event can go off very successfully.

We want to remind folks that might be coming from out-of-state to review our travel provisions, our quarantine protocols and recommendations that we have within the State. Remind them that we do encourage folks to wear masks, whenever they cannot social distance. If they are going to be at any large scheduled gathering, there actually is a mask requirement for those of over 100.

And my hats off to a lot of the retail groups, businesses, and the restaurants have been working very closely with all of our State Personnel. The Mayor, the City Council, has all been very involved, in terms of just making sure that we're all on the same page, as we enter this week. We just want to make sure that it goes off successfully.

And also, as a reminder, anyone with symptoms, anyone thinking of going to Bike Week, if you have symptoms of any kind, you really should not be attending at all. And so, we just want people to take the event seriously, be very smart about how they approach it. And if they do that, I think we can definitely have a very successful event.

So, along those same guidelines, as well if folks remember, a month-or-so ago, maybe even more than that, we announced that restaurant capacity in New Hampshire went from 50% to 100% in six of the counties across the northern and western part of the State where COVID was not and continues to have a very low prevalence, was not very prevalent at the time. We obviously allowed our outdoor facilities to flex -- I'm sorry, our restaurants to flex their outdoor dining facilities. And that has given them a lot of opportunity.

But obviously given the encouraging trends we see here, the fact that the numbers are low, and following that CDC gauging criteria that we've put in place for making a lot of our recommendations, hearing the recommendations of the Reopen Committee and some of the public testimony that has come in, it's very justified that we understand that, when the numbers are low, the gauging criteria's met, we're announcing we're going to 100% capacity on restaurants all across the State, provided that, again, all of the other guidelines and protocols are followed.

The 6-foot distancing is very important. Wearing masks in the public areas of those establishments is very important. Making sure that the staff is wearing masks, if they're front-facing staff with the customers; all those provisions are in place and will remain in place for quite some time, without a doubt.

But, allowing some of these businesses, especially understanding that we're coming into the fall months, our numbers are very good. Outdoor seating is probably not as possible, or going to be as possible as it was over the summer.

So, effective immediately, we will have 100% capacity in restaurants that choose to do so. Again, it's really up to the restaurants, as well, maintaining that 6-foot barrier and I think that zone that has really allowed the social distancing that's so important, in terms of the transmissivity of the virus when in indoor facilities.

But, again, if you're in a bar or a restaurant, there is no standing at the bar. There's no congregating. You have to maintain those distances. It's something that we've worked very closely with the restaurant owners and managers in ensuring that they understand those guidance protocols, how important they are for the duration.

As a reminder, something that we talked about very early on was GOFERR. GOFERR is the group, the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery. I think I got that acronym right. They are the group that is really charged with making a lot of the recommendations and implementing a lot of the \$1.25 billion of flexible CARES Act funding that the State receives.

Transparency is a big hallmark of that. These are Government dollars. These are taxpayer dollars, if you will. And transparency's very important. So we've created a website at goferr.nh.gov/transparency. This is just a quick screenshot of it, as you can see.

There's a lot of different filters there. You can filter by the fund and the program. You can look at your town. You can look at a whole variety of ways of looking at the data and seeing exactly where the dollars are going. To-date, there's just shy of \$600 million that has been actually out-the-door disbursed. There's been a lot more of that actually allocated. But there's still funds that are going through kind of a second, or third, or even fourth phase. Maybe the Healthcare Fund, the Long-Term Care Facility Fund, a lot of those are going through second and third rounds of distribution. So there's still a lot more money to go out, to be sure. But, this is a great website. We've tried our best to dot the Is and cross the Ts, so folks know where that opportunity has been provided in their community.

Again, most of the funds that were created in the State of New Hampshire don't even exist in other States. A lot of States, given the level of COVID and the amount of funding, were really restricted and had to focus a lot of their dollars solely into testing and PPE, healthcare and hospitals obviously a top priority. We had a little more flexibility, in terms of providing it into the communities: the Self-Employment Fund, farmers, Nonprofit Fund, the Main Street Relief Fund. All great unique solutions for New Hampshire, and has obviously provided a lot of financial relief to folks who really need it the most.

But we encourage folks to go to the website and check it out. And they can play with it. If you have any questions or concerns, I think they're putting some buttons on there, so if you have any questions, you can ask it directly of GOFERR.

There's two more issues we want to talk about. As many of you know, a few weeks ago, we did announce an investigation and a review into the State's Department of Revenue -- the Massachusetts State Department of Revenue attempting to collect their income tax on our citizens that were remotely working back in New Hampshire. And as I've repeatedly said, we will always stand up for our citizens and fight for what's right.

This coming in a couple weeks, I think maybe next week, on August 27th, 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue will hold a public hearing on the rule change that they put forward that would permanently allow the State of Massachusetts to come in and charge their income tax for folks that aren't even actually working within their borders.

I did instruct the Department of Business and Economic Affairs, Commissioner Taylor Caswell, and the Attorney General, Gordon MacDonald, to submit written testimony based on the review that our Department of Justice just conducted, and submit that testimony as part of that public hearing. It's not an accident that New Hampshire is income tax-free. It's actually done, I think, on the shoulders on many years of hard work. We fought for it. We continue to fight for it every day.

And some citizens have asked how they can make their voices heard, as part of that public hearing process in Massachusetts. So they can go to -- it's called rulesandregs@dor.state.ma.us. That's the website that I -- the email that you can use for folks who want to actually submit testimony, their story, whatever it might be.

So, again, we just want citizens to understand that they do have a voice and a say in this process. It is in Massachusetts. And again, we will just kind of make that voice heard as loud as we can. And hopefully Massachusetts will choose to do the right thing and abandon this idea. But, if not, there are other avenues we can always pursue after-the-fact. But again rulesandregs@dor.state.ma.us for those who have an interest in participating in the public hearing process.

And then, finally, one other issue I really want to talk about, we talk a lot about the mental-health aspects of COVID-19, the indirect negative aspects of everything from the social distancing, which is very important. But it can result in isolation.

The remote learning, which, again, could be very positive, but it can also result in kids not socializing or being isolated, for kids, teenagers, and adults alike, to be sure. And without a doubt, we have seen levels of anxiety and depression increase in various aspects of our community across the State.

We have folks that are waiting to make sure they can get into beds, or community mental-health centers. And we want to make sure that we're addressing this. We're not waiting for the tsunami to really come upon us.

As we transition to fall and kind of that back-to-school transition that a lot of us, I think, are anticipating, that really is a great time. I do believe this. And speaking not just as a dad and as a Governor, and someone in a community, this is a really great time to kind of build those good habits, and also know what support systems are out there, for you, for your family, for your kids, teenagers in a variety of different ways. And we want to highlight it, because it is directly related to the COVID crisis.

We see kids on extended times on screens, right? Again, part of that isolation, they can't gather with friends like they might normally do. A lot of children's programs that would typically be in the State, as much as we've put a lot of money into them, just couldn't get up-and-running for various reasons. And that just has resulted in extended periods of social isolation.

We want to be there for those kids and for those families. And there are great, great resources in the State. And one of the frustrations we have sometimes is having all of these wonderful resources that sometimes go untapped or unknown about with the families in the State. The sooner you reach out for help, the better you're going to have the outcomes of healing and resilience. And that's what it's really all about.

Someone used a good line and I put it up here. And he said, kids seem to have replaced conversation with socialization, and screen time with isolation. And it's kind of a temporary thing, we hope. But it can build kind of that dependence a little bit. And we just want to get back into those good habits.

Everything in moderation. I mean, technology's part of our life. We know that. But we really want to reemphasize that level of moderation. It's going to be, for example, a beautiful weekend this weekend. It's a great time to get outside. It's a great time to pull away from technology a little bit and start building those habits for you and your family.

We have put a button on our nh.gov/COVID-19 website. It says Mental Health Stress and Anxiety Support. There's a whole list of supports there for families, not just around mental health, around a variety of different issues that your family may be facing. But there's great supports in there.

There's a couple small videos that are just wonderful, some resources on how technology affects kids, some resources on what's available in your community. And it's really about breaking down that stigma. I'm a big believer in just being able to talk about this stuff, breaking down the stigma. A lot of times, individuals won't want to seek help, because they're afraid. They don't know that system. It's something they haven't done before, tough to kind of acknowledge that there could be issues.

But mental health is like any other illness. It's something that can be treated. And the earlier you treat it, the better the results are going to be. So we just want to really make sure that those resources are available for the community. So you can check everything out at nh.gov/COVID. And you can just press the little Mental Health button there.

And we will be updating it. We just kind of created it literally about two hours ago. I didn't want another weekend to go by before we were really talking about this issue. So we will be updating it and refreshing it a little bit as we go forward. And hopefully folks can find it useful and use it as a resources for themselves and their families. I guess, with that, we can open it up for questions. I was going to say good morning. Good afternoon, Paula. How are you?

Q&A Session

Good afternoon, Governor. How are you?

Governor Sununu:

Good. You're always so quick with your hand. Did you sit in the front row in school? You were that? Yeah.

Yeah.

Governor Sununu:

Like Arnold Horshack, asking every question?

Yeah. I'm thinking of something. Do the restaurant rules go into effect immediately?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

And had you thought about 75% or a different...

Governor Sununu:

Yes.

And what triggers would there be for you to go back?

Governor Sununu:

Great question; so yes, the restaurant rules of 100% across the State go into effect immediately. We did look at 75%. But, again, knowing that 6 of our 10 counties were already at 100%, we had no major outbreaks from restaurants, no major indicators that there was a significant issue coming from that population and from those types of facilities. So it made sense to go to 100%.

I think that's what a lot of the restaurant owners and the customers were looking for. And because we had success and the numbers are very low, that kind of continual gauging criteria of having at least two to four weeks of a downward or at least a flat trend were met. And now's the time to do it.

I think we were waiting a little bit because I don't want to say I'm surprised that our numbers are so low, but I'm surprised our numbers are so low. I think a lot of us expected that the numbers would be rising, as we enter into the fall. It hasn't happened yet. So it's an appropriate time. And I think it provides the flexibility. And if you do it too late, it's too late. So it provides the flexibility for restaurants to prepare for the fall, knowing that they likely will have this opportunity.

There isn't a specific number where we go backwards. I think there's always that possibility, of course. I think we will have to look at the trends, both for individual locations, for regional trends, right? Is it happening just in the southern tier? Is it happening in the northern tier?

We were very successful breaking this out by county before. So we could always go back to that type of model. But I'm not setting ourselves up with a specific number and not giving us the flexibility to be smart about what we do.

If there was one restaurant that had one major event, that doesn't necessarily mean that you have to go backwards on the rest of the State. And so, if that were to happen, we just want to be able to keep those types of variables into consideration.

Based on what you've seen from the Attorney General and Commissioner Caswell, do you think there are grounds to sue the State on constitutional or legal clauses?

Governor Sununu:

So, the question is, based on having to do with the Massachusetts income tax grab that they're trying on our citizens, are there grounds to sue the State? I think there's a couple of different legal paths, frankly. There could be grounds for citizens, who have direct standing, who would be impacted because it's their dollars that are getting pulled out of their pocket.

I think there could potentially be grounds for the State, on behalf of the interest of the citizens of the State. I'm not a lawyer. But I can tell you the Attorney General has indicated there's a variety of different ways that this could go.

So my sense is there's going to be outreach not just from New Hampshire but from other States across the region who are kind of undergoing the same issues. And their citizens are now being taxed by Massachusetts, I believe very unfairly. And so, I think there'll be enough push there that I think our voices will be heard. Whether they act on that, I don't know. But we will have other legal remedies to pursue, as well, if they don't undo their decision.

Governor, back to restaurants for a second, does this affect venues in any way, weddings, specifically? Does that change their plan?

Governor Sununu:

That's a great question. Does it affect weddings? I'm going to have to get back to you. That's a great question. I'm not sure where the -- I don't have the guidance directly in front of me. The weddings were attached to the restaurant capacity early on.

I'm going to go to Dr. Chan a little bit here. Did we attach in the six counties where we've had 100% open, were the weddings also at 100%? I can't remember, either. That's a great question. Yeah, I don't know. We will have to get back to you on that one. Yeah. I'm looking at my staff in the back of the room. Please write that down and we will try to get an answer immediately.

Two questions about data and Bike Week for whomever; the first one being: how would the State be tracking cases that are connected to Bike Week, if they should test positive? How are we keeping track of that and publishing it? And the second being: we've said we expect a lot of these people going to Bike Week to be from New England, but will there be any kind of tracking of who the attendees are and/or where they're coming from? Will Department of Transportation be doing any kind of numbers on that?

Governor Sununu:

Tracking like how many out-of-staters might come into Bike Week?

Yes.

Governor Sununu:

It's a good question.

And from where.

Governor Sununu:

Sure; yeah, I'll turn to the Commissioner or Dr. Chan, in terms of if you wanted to talk about the general contact tracing protocols that we have in place. I think that would answer the first one. I'll take the second one.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Thanks. So part of our contact tracing is we have a very specific question, if you have attended a large event or some type of rally, or been to a venue where there's been a large group in our contact tracing. So we log it there so that we can track if there's patterns of chains of transmission, things like that.

How are we going to put it out publicly? If there is a reason, like if we have to do a public notification, like every other event, we will do one if there's a reason to believe that we need to notify the public.

For something the size of Bike Week, if we have multiple people attend Bike Week that come back positive, it would be hard to do full contact tracing, if they attended large events at Bike Week. So, I would say that a public notification is likely, unless it was a very isolated incident, like in a restaurant with a server that knew exactly who they served. But in a large event like that, especially if it's outdoor, outdoor events, and there's hundreds of people, regardless of whether you're wearing a mask or not, that risk of transmission is there. So we will do public notification if we need to, as part of our contact tracing investigation. But we're keeping our fingers crossed that we're not going to see any of those numbers.

Just a quick follow-up, so if someone from out-of-state were to go home and test positive in their home State, would that information come back to you?

Commissioner Shibinette:

It should. So, we share information like that between States on a regular basis. I know that New Hampshire has reached out to multiple States where we have some positive that have said that they attended event in another State. So we will reach out to that State and say, just so you know, we have someone. So that's a pretty common communication that happens between States on a regular basis.

Governor Sununu:

Great; and as for the question as it pertains to tracking out-of-staters, we don't follow license plates or anything like that. I think there's some historical data, in terms of the general tourism, how many folks come from out-of-state. But there's really no way to track it specifically to Bike Week. We

will probably know for some of the general weekends that come up. But I think we don't have people walking around reading license plates in Laconia. So, do we have -- oh, sure. Yeah.

Governor, as you pointed out with regard to restaurants, this has been something we've been seeking a long time. We've also heard from retail and tourist attractions. They're at limited capacities. Given the numbers, is it possible you might consider raising those, as well?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so, great question. So, the question is: are we looking at raising the capacity limitations for retail or tourism attractions, where right now they're pretty much at 50%. The quick answer is not right now. And the main reason is because we looked at that very closely. And I think some of the Representatives of the Retail Association as us to. And I think they made some very good arguments.

When you're sitting at a table, you can keep your 6 feet between a party and another party. It's kind of a fixed 6 feet. When you get up, you can wear your mask and keep your safe provisions, if you will, amongst the other parties.

When you're walking around a general store, let's say, we have a lot of older stores. They're some of our more tighter, close-knit, retail facilities. It's really hard to maintain that 6 feet. And if you go back to 100%, there are clearly stores where you'll just be shoulder-to-shoulder, especially during the tourism season's time. And that wouldn't necessarily be a smart and safe thing to do at this time.

So, it's something that we looked at, we will continue to look at. But right now, just knowing just the physical dynamics of how people interact in a retail setting, where you can kind of walk where you want to walk -- a lot of folks have their little pathways and they ask folks to maintain 6 feet. They're limiting the number of people. They're doing really good stuff.

But especially during tourism season, if you go to 100%, I won't name them but I can think of a couple great venues and facilities in New Hampshire where everyone will be tight up against the fudge counter trying to get candy. And I mean, that's just the way it rolls. And usually it's great. But unfortunately with the COVID pandemic, we got to maintain some of those safe barriers, as people roam around a facility.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Hi, I have one question for Commissioner Shibinette and then a question for the Governor. For the Commissioner, do you have the total tally in terms of the number of infections and deaths at the Greenbriar? And then, for the Governor, can you talk a little bit about voting for folks and viewers who maybe didn't see the guidance from the AG's Office and Secretary of State this week, in terms of there's been a lot of confusion about drop boxes. And the way I read that is you cannot just leave your ballot in a drop box, unless that box is staffed by a Municipal Official.

Governor Sununu:

Sure, I'll let you take the Greenbriar question, Commissioner. Sorry.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Yes, I do have the total numbers. So, for Greenbriar's outbreak, they had 124 residents that tested positive for COVID-19. They had 34 staff for a total of 158, and 28 deaths that were confirmed COVID-19. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

We will just leave it out. Something tells me you'll be back. You never know. Yeah, so the Attorney General released some more detailed guidance around voting, how voting will take place. We're going to have -- the first major voting event will be the state primary in early September, and then obviously followed by the general election in November.

Your question, there's a lot of different pieces in there. And if any of the Town Moderators or the Clerks have not seen it, I highly recommend that folks download that guidance. I think the Attorney General's Office has been working on a very one-on-one basis with folks all across the State in terms of communicating, along with the Secretary of State's Office, educating, making sure that they have what they need, and they know kind of the Rules and Regulations, and Guidelines that will dictate a lot of the voting provisions.

Your question specifically about the drop boxes is my understanding -- and again, I don't have it in front of me -- is that, yes, you can't just have kind of a box sitting outside your polling place where you just come up and drop it in. It has to be effectively manned, if you will, or an individual has to be there to assure that you take the ballot and put it into the drop box.

So, there's just another kind of layer of security, just to ensure one person, one vote, one ballot, and making sure. It's not just for the folks at the polling place. But it's for you. It's for you, as a citizen, to know that your vote just didn't get dropped in an unattended box, that there's somebody there, an Official with the town, that has the training and understands the protocols around voting, so your vote is secured.

Lisa Raela (ph) with the New Hampshire Business Review:
Hi, Governor. I have a couple questions.

Governor Sununu:

Okay, sure.

Lisa Raela (ph) with the New Hampshire Business Review:
I wanted to ask you a couple questions. Senator Hassan had introduced a Bill to extend the deadline of the CARES Act funding through 2021. I'm asking regarding the emergency broadband funding. I'm just curious if you'd spoken with Senator Hassan or other Members of New Hampshire's Congressional Delegation about any sort of deadline extension, or even a need to adjust the application requirements, even if there's a future round of Federal funding, as some towns I've spoken to said they weren't ready to build out this year. But they could benefit from financial assistance in the future to develop things like engineering plans and other procedures that lead up to putting out an RFP for construction of the network.

Governor Sununu:

Sure; and then do you have a second one?

Lisa Raela (ph) with the New Hampshire Business Review:

Yes, so my second question is, I'm wondering if you have an idea of when you might announce the -- I know you announced part of the \$16 million you plan to allocate to towns to build out broadband. Is there a sense of when you might give us further details on the other part of that?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, both very good questions. The first question is really about the fact that our use of CARES Act funds, all these GOFERR funds, they must all be expended by the end of this calendar year. So when we created specifically our broadband fund, that requires construction. That requires putting fiber in the ground. We knew there might be some limitations. And sure enough, my guess is about \$16 million -- I think that was the final number instead of the \$50 million -- but \$16 million of projects are likely to go forward. That's great. Thousands of people are going to be hooked up with high-speed internet. And that's a huge opportunity.

The hope is that Washington, Congress, somebody acts to extend that deadline of spending the money from the end of this year, ideally through the end of next year would be terrific, because we are going to have issues of COVID early into 2021. It makes perfect sense. I'm very supportive of that. I know Senator Hassan was pushing that initiative, as well. And so, we would love to see that.

Broadband is one of those programs that would really, really benefit from it, because you'd get a whole lot more of participations from cities, towns, and localities to get those dollars spent. So the funds are there. But timing was really the critical issue. So we'd love to see the extension. We were actually just talking about that this morning.

All the Contracts now have been finalized. We couldn't announce all the projects, because some of the Contracts were only finalized in the last week-or-so. But we will have a website up that we're building, just a page that will identify all the different Districts and towns that will be receiving -- and the partnerships that will be receiving these funds to allow that to happen. So we will have a website up-and-running quite soon.

I think we will have probably maybe on Tuesday -- I don't have it in front of me now, but maybe on Tuesday we will come back with just a review of all the different Districts and projects that have received broadband funding. I think it's going to be awesome. Thousands and thousands of people are getting high-speed internet that otherwise just have quasi-dead connections. And it's going to be a great opportunity for working from home, remote learning, whatever it might be.

Michael Graham with the New Hampshire Journal:

Thanks so much. Two quick questions: one is on behalf of the 84,000-or-so Granite Staters who did commute to Massachusetts and have been sent home by Governor Baker but is still being taxed by Governor Baker, this has been happening since March. If you come to an agreement with Massachusetts, are you going to ask Massachusetts to rescind the taxes that they've already wrongly paid? And does it help to have a fellow Republican across the border? And then, second question is: some people are asking why there doesn't seem more concern about this issue. Your response has been muted. The response of your

Administration has been muted. It's a significant number of workers. They work hard. They're being taxed potentially illegally by another State. And the issue of New Hampshire's sovereignty seems to be under threat by the State of Massachusetts. Why isn't this a bigger issue? Why aren't you more agitated by it?

Governor Sununu:

Well, okay, I'll take both parts of that question. The first is: would we be asking to potentially rescind taxes paid? Yes, of course, if there was something wrongly done. I think that's probably something that the Court would ultimately have to decide. My guess is Massachusetts isn't going to willingly start sending checks back to the citizens of New Hampshire. But, again, as we discussed, there are legal remedies and recourses there.

I completely reject the idea that the response has been muted. From the second this issue really sparked up, we had our Attorney General working on it. I called Charlie Baker directly. It is a fairly complex legal issue, in terms of the standing that folks might have, the different legal pathways that might be there, how the public hearing in Massachusetts was going to take place, issues of constitutionality, fairness, consistency. These are all very different issues that you can go after it on.

It isn't just sending a letter and sending, send our money back. So, it's quite complex and we've been on it since day 1. If the issue is muted, there's not a day that goes by in our office where we're not talking about it and the Attorney General's Team isn't working on it. It isn't just one person. They have an entire team that's been working on this issue.

So, to say that it's been muted and we haven't put the emphasis on it that it deserves is completely unfair. I think you got to read your own news a little bit more. It's a key issue. We will be right on top of it. All right. What else we got? It's Friday. It's Friday. Everyone's excited for a good weekend.

Governor, I just have one other question.

Governor Sununu:

I noticed Kevin's wearing his -- I love the shirt. You are ready to go, my friend.

Casual Friday, right?

Governor Sununu:

I feel like I'm at Hawaii at dusk. It looks good.

With regard to Pease Development Authority, your office had approached the Board about selling land that we lease to industrial developers right now. I wondered if you could speak to the logic behind that, what you hope to achieve, if you're allowed to do that.

Governor Sununu:

Sure, yeah. So the Pease Development Authority was the result of one of the first BRAC closures in the country back in the early-'90s, maybe even the late-'80s, '90, '91. The country started closing BRAC sites, Base Realignment and Closure process that the Federal Government undertook to save money and just consolidate, be a little more efficient.

As part of that process, most of those closures of Military sites resulted in Development Authorities. Pease was one of the first and oldest ones. It has been 30 years. There are many Development Authorities across this country that have come and gone and privatized their land, as designed. And Pease hasn't done that at all.

So, we have an airport. It's a very different situation. And of course the FAA and I think the Pease Development Authority has to be in charge of that and make sure that there's a regulatory system around that. We're not trying to thwart that at all by any means. There's environmental issues there. There's a lot of different issues that have to be undertaken by a group like Pease.

But the vast majority of the land has been redeveloped. It's sitting in ground leases, essentially. Those buildings sit on ground leases. And effectively the State technically owns the land regulated by the Federal Government. And all we are looking to do is the possibility, just the option -- we're not saying we're going to do anything yet. I was looking for the option to say, well, this is developed land. There's no direct benefit and direct connection to the airport. So let's keep that with the FAA. Let's take these pieces of land over here, potentially sell them off. Get them a little higher tax value and whatnot for the cities and towns -- Portsmouth, Newington, and Greenland -- that could really benefit from that.

The developers would like to see that. I know a lot of the tenants would like to see that. Those buildings are limited in how they get financed, because the land can't be officially owned by the individual.

So the Federal Government has allowed us to extend the financing from 49 to I think 75 years. Really 99-year ground financing is really what those folks like to see. It really changes the dynamics of the financing.

So there's all these financial reasons to do it. There's no real practical reason to keep a lot of that land connected to the airport. And so, we're simply asking that 30 years has gone by. It was never envisioned to keep Pease Development Authority up-and-running for 30 years. So we're just looking to take those steps.

I don't know why they didn't want to at least allow that discussion to happen. It's their choice. They're a Board. They're allowed to do it. I think that, by selling that land, you could potentially receive a lot of money that goes right back into the infrastructure of the seacoast. It could go right back into the Portsmouth Port, maybe do dredging or expand the Port capability. There's a lot of financial opportunity there, while still keeping the airport exactly as it is, regulated and managed.

The State owns and runs a golf course. Think about that. The State owns a golf course. What State should be in the business of owning golf courses? And so, that's just an example of the piece of land that could either be privatized or again just restructured. It's been under the same structure for 30 years. I

think it was never envisioned to do that. So we're just trying to take the next logical steps. They want to keep doing it the same old way. I guess that's the Board's right to do that.

That sounds like an idea you haven't given up on, despite...

Governor Sununu:

Oh, no, there's a lot of opportunities there. I mean, we've talked to folks in the Federal Government that love the idea that kind of manage all these former BRAC sites and Development Authorities that have been created all over the country.

As an Environmental Engineer, I worked many, many years on BRAC sites that are now fully developed and privatized. The Sacramento Army Depot, the Tooele Army Depot in Utah, I mean, I've spent a lot of time at these places. And you saw all these businesses come in. The sites got privatized. They got cleaned up, environmentally. They got turned over to the tax rolls the right way, huge economic successes for that area.

Pease is an economic success. Don't make any mistake about it. But to have the flexibility of private land ownership as opposed to the Government just holding everything into perpetuity, that doesn't make the best economic sense. So that's all. We're just trying to move things along. There might be other opportunities, but it's fine.

Okay. Going to be a good weekend; weather's going to be good. Let's try to get off those devices a little bit, give ourselves a little non-screen time. Pretend it's 1995, right? We didn't have cellphones. We didn't have as many -- well, we had, I guess, Nintendo, maybe not as many -- Xbox is a little intense. But I think we need to kind of pull ourselves away from the screen, enjoy the fresh weather, get outside, read a book, get our minds kind of rebuilt, I think, and reprogrammed back to that kind of just different way of thinking, and resocialization.

I think it's very important. It's really important for that physical and mental health balance. And now's definitely the time to do it. So, we encourage everyone to take -- maybe I'll shut my cellphone off. Well, I won't shut it off. I tell you what. Here's my promise. I will not pick up my phone unless it rings. How about that? And I know it's going to ring off the hook. Everyone's going to call me at this point now.

No, but I will. We will try to put it down. Lord knows I don't watch much news anyways, so I'm not going to miss out there. But I'll do everything I can not to pick up the phone, unless it rings. And maybe if we all do that, we can kind of enjoy these last few weeks of summer. That's going to be beautiful weather out there. All right. We will see you on Tuesday. Thank you, guys, very much.