



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Thursday, October 29, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

All right, good afternoon. Just having a conversation as we walked in. Ooh, we got a full house here today. This is great. This is terrific. Good to see everybody. So, I guess a variety of different things to talk about, obviously it's a very busy week for a lot of folks on a lot of different levels. I'm sure the press has a lot of questions. So we're going to jump right into a Public Health update and then we will go from there.

Dr. Chan:

Good afternoon. So, Public Health is announcing 131 new people diagnosed with COVID-19 today in New Hampshire. 103 of these individuals tested positive by PCR. And 28 tested positive by antigen testing.

In the last week, we have averaged about 110 new infections per day statewide. Currently, there are 1,106 people with active infection, which is an increase from last week at this time. And the 14-day rate of new infections statewide is currently at 96.5 new infections per 100,000 population, which is also an increase from last week.

Our test-positivity rate continues to hover around 1% or slightly above. And there are zero new people hospitalized with COVID-19 that we are announcing today, and 30 people currently hospitalized with COVID-19 statewide. That's the current daily hospital census for people hospitalized with COVID-19.

Sadly, we are announcing four new deaths today related to COVID-19. All four of these individuals were residents of long care facilities. And the total number of people that have died from COVID-19 during this pandemic currently stands at 482 individuals.

So, the overall numbers of hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 remain low. But the increasing trends that we are seeing are pointing certainly to increasing community transmission. Currently the counties of Merrimack, Rockingham, and Hillsborough Counties, including the Cities of Manchester and Nashua are now at a substantial level of community transmission, based on the metrics that we had previously published and posted on our data dashboard. And we know that as community transmission increases, the risk of COVID-19 to people within our community is also going to increase.

And so, the recommended community mitigation measures, or strategies, those layers of protection that we continually talk about, remain important and are still how we are going to control spread of this virus, prevent the numbers from increasing further, and be able to continue to operate our schools and businesses safely. With that, I will hand things over to Commissioner Shibiante. Thanks.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Good afternoon. For a long-term care update, we don't have any outbreaks to close. We have no new outbreaks. So that remains at three outbreaks in the long-term care industry: Bedford Hills; Pine Rock Manor; and St. Teresa's [sic] in Manchester. Those are still all active outbreaks this week.

For the county phases, as Dr. Chan has said, we've seen our community transmission levels go up. You will see that all of the red are now back in Phase 1, the yellow in Phase 2. And we do not have any counties in Phase 3 any longer.

This is not unexpected. We have a pretty low threshold for stepping back long-term care. All long-term care facilities are still able to do visitation, if they're not in a current outbreak status. And we encourage nursing homes to find creative ways to make sure that the residents continue to have -- there's like a social wellbeing -- their needs met, and continue to be able to interact and visit with their loved ones.

Couple of other things that I wanted to talk about today around the BinaxNOW cards, we had talked about those coming in a couple weeks ago. And we had outfitted the community testing sites with those BinaxNOW cards to do symptomatic testing.

With additional Federal Guidance, they did tell us that we were able to use them in a screening program. So we did decide to go out and start a surveillance screening program with the First Responder community. I met with them last week. They're a wonderful group of people that were very excited about getting them into a screening program. So what we're calling FROST -- we love our acronyms at Public Health -- the First Responder Optional Screening Test Program, so this program we will be coordinating through our EMS Bureau at Homeland Security. And the Fire, Police, and EMS in each time that have CALEA Certificates will be able to do monthly tests with the BinaxNOW cards.

We're in the process of doing training. We start with the Fire Academy and the Police Academies, will be first to be tested. And then, we will be sending out the BinaxNOW cards to all of the Police and Fire Departments that are participating around the State in the coming weeks. So, very excited about that; we're hoping to get anywhere between 4,000 and 5,000 participating in a monthly screening program with the BinaxNOW cards.

In addition to FROST, we've also distributed these testing devices both to the testing centers. This week, we are doing VNA and homecare services. So for people with disabilities or elderly people living in the home that are not able to easily access testing sites, their VNA, or their Homecare Provider, can now go into the home and perform a test in the home.

We've distributed to New Hampshire Hospital, same concept, very difficult to access testing through a regular testing site. Next week, we will be looking at the County Jails and the State Prison to be trained in utilizing those testing cards within their walls.

Our residential programs in the communities, our federally-qualified health centers, and a variety of other different groups of people that will have access to these cards as we start to roll out our weekly supply of them to a variety of people; that's all I have. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Terrific; thank you, Commissioner. A little more on a data update, just, again, we haven't done one of these in a while. We just have three quick slides, I think three-or-so, all very easily obtainable data just for folks understanding.

So the first is we talked about the percent-positive rate. We've been talking about that for quite a while. We are currently the fourth lowest in the nation. That's our seven-day average of percent positivity. So we are just doing a lot of tests, as we see the numbers go up. It's kind of a reflection of the number of tests that we're doing.

And people always say, well, what's the number that really starts getting you concerned? And I think, obviously, as we creep up at the 5% or 10% range, where some of these States are I'm going to give you, some States are closer to 30% percent of percent positivity, which is just alarming, without a doubt, especially some of the midwestern States. Those are rural States. This isn't just a bit city, inner city issue, as we saw with some of the first and second waves of the viral spread across the country. You're seeing a lot more rural States, as similar demographics that we have here in New Hampshire.

And so, that's, again, kind of building on the discussion that was just had with Commissioner Shibinette. Virtually all our counties are seeing rates above 50 cases per 100,000, in terms of population, which is triggering us into that second and third phase -- or first and second phase, sorry. First and second, I got my first and third mixed up; the first and second phase.

So the numbers are definitely ticking up. The percent-positivity's still low. But we just have to be -- the reason I bring this up is just that a lot of these States here, six weeks ago, were back here. They were having 1% or 2% percent positivity just 6 weeks ago. And so, we're very concerned. And so, this is some of the predictive analytics that we try to use, in terms of seeing where other States have gone and potentially where we could go, as well.

This is the hospitalization rate. Again, it still remains fairly low, which is very good. What this is showing -- it might be a little hard to see on a television, but what we're showing here are New England States. So, for example, this is the hospitalizations per million of population. In green, you have Rhode Island. In yellow, you have Massachusetts. In blue, you have Connecticut. And then, down here, purple is New Hampshire. And you can example ours is ticking up a little bit over the past couple days. And that is typically hospitalizations can be a bit of a lag to the number of cases that you're seeing out there. And fatality is even a lag even further behind that.

So everyone is kind of on that upward trend. And again, we're not necessarily in the same position as Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. But we have to be very cognizant that we could very easily get there, which is why we're so adamant about wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, and being very aware of the guidance documents that we've put in place, whether it's for where you work, or how you might go shopping, or going to a restaurant, or whatever it might be. I think the guidance documents were designed very, very well. And we just want to make sure people are adhering to it and staying very vigilant, right on top of it.

Oh, that's it. Okay, great. So those are the two big ones for us. We've talked about the fatality rate, as well. And unfortunately we did have four more people pass away from COVID, all in long-term care facilities. Our fatality rate in the general community transmission still remains very, very low, as it always has been.

We still have three outbreaks in long-term care facilities. And we will be monitoring those, as we have been, very aggressively. As was discussed, our very aggressive sentinel testing program that

already exists within long-term care facilities, we're taking that type of model and mentality further out using the Binax cards with the First Responder Program that we announced today. So, again, that just helps us think a little more proactive about finding those that may be asymptomatic and still testing positive for COVID-19.

Moving on, I want to talk a little bit about restaurants. Restaurants, as we know, as it gets colder, we have seen, and more folks come inside, because they just cannot sustain outdoor dining the way they were able to over the summer. We've made provisions and used some of the successful models we've seen in other States, whether it's the partitions or maintaining 6 feet apart. So we feel very confident that that could all be managed very positively.

But earlier today, the Economic Reopening Task Force did recommend a request that came directly from the New Hampshire Lodging and Restaurant Association. So the restaurants are making this request to us to require restaurants to collect some very simple contact information, being name, phone number, and time of arrival, from patrons at those food service establishments.

So this proposal really seeks to help our State's contact tracing program and our Team to get in touch with individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19 more efficiently in those circumstances where COVID-19 may be found or existing within one of those establishments, as opposed to doing the larger public notifications, which we can still do. It just helps us pre-identify folks very, very quickly by having patrons basically just give us their name and phone number at those establishments.

The process has worked very well in other States across the country, including most New England States have the exact same protocols. And this kind of information is already collected for those making reservations. So it's very similar to that entire process. So I don't think we're asking, and I don't think the Restaurant Association is looking to ask for anything outside of the norm. We just want to make it very simple for folks. We've always tried to really harp on making it simple for the consumers.

I agree with this recommendation. I think it's a good idea. We've approved it. It will go into effect beginning this Saturday, October 31st, to give restaurants a little bit time to prepare. Some restaurants might need a little extra time. It was brought by the industry, and again another example, I think, of the very good partnership that we've had with the restaurant industry, as a whole.

A few updates: first our masks. So, yeah, this is pretty great. We are pleased to share that the Federal Government sent 300,000 masks for distribution specifically to schools across the State, 200,000 of which have already been distributed to school systems, from Berlin to Nashua, Portsmouth to Keene, up and down and across the State. And as additional needs arise in the Districts, obviously we stand ready to help. So that was a nice little bonus for us so folks can have the additional PPE needed to maintain and ensure that kids can be in school safely.

This allocation of masks further supports our efforts just to keep schools open and keep that opportunity open for those kids, knowing that there is so much opportunity and benefit to the socialization aspects, one-on-one, being able to work one-on-one with Teachers on specific areas, and making sure that individual students aren't falling through those cracks. It's obviously an essential part of the infrastructure. And we just don't want cost to be a barrier. So all these masks are being made available cost-free.

And on the topic of schools, as well, I wanted to take a moment to highlight some of the very good news announced by the Department of Education. And one thing that we knew back in March is that serving meals is such a big part of that school day, so important and vital, and counted on by so many kids. And so, that was one of the biggest concerns we had, as you go through a remote or a hybrid

program, how you get those important meals. Sometimes it is the only warm meal of the day for some of these students.

Since the onset of COVID-19 in March, schools have served over 6.5 million meals to students across the State. More than 4.2 million of those meals have been served free-of-charge to students, which is an increase of over 300,000 compared to the same period last year.

We know that good nutrition is essential for students to learn effectively. And since the beginning of the pandemic, one of our priorities has been to ensure that students continue to receive those healthy meals. They don't have a gap within that system. Regardless of the family's financial status, or whether or not they're in school or a remote-learning program, regardless of what the situation is, we need to make sure that the program is stood up and that we're being innovative in our attempts and our opportunity to get the meals out to the students.

The United States Department of Agriculture, they've been a great partner in the effort. This was a priority of theirs from very, very early on. And we want to thank them for their approval for the State Waiver to extend the meals to students at no cost. They offered this waiver program. New Hampshire was the very first State in the country to take advantage of it. And I think the Department of Education has done a great job working with the locals and working with it, from the Federal Government all the way down to the local schools, to make sure that this is a reality.

Main Street Relief Fund 2.0, we've been talking about it for a couple weeks. Just as a reminder, the application period for the second round of the Main Street Relief Fund, it closes tomorrow. So it's again only takes about 20 minutes to fill out. Like the first fund, Applicants for this second \$100 million fund must be a for-profit business with its principal place of business here within New Hampshire, and they've been in operation since May 29th, 2019. So they need at least a year of operation. And they face gross receipt losses. So in other words, they're making less this year than they did last year, and that's where we're really trying to fill the gap for those situations of hardship that a lot of businesses are facing.

So if you have yet to apply, the good news is that the Application's very simple. You have another day to complete it. As of today, about 3600 businesses across the State have already applied into that fund. And so, again, once that application period closes, usually we need about a week to kind of sort through. The Team at GOFERR goes through and sorts through, double-checks to make sure everyone that has applied is truly eligible. Those who are not eligible are brought out of the fund. And then, a formulaic allocation is kind of -- I always say -- agnostically brought across the board. Everyone receives the same allocation, regardless of the -- percent allocation, regardless of their status. As long as they're eligible, they're eligible.

And then, obviously this is a very big week, in terms of elections. Everyone's been talking about the elections. I think I speak for everyone in America when I say, I can't wait until it's over. And I hope it's over on Tuesday night, one way or the other. I don't know. I think a lot of us have our doubts, whether that's going to happen, knowing that, at least at a national level, you have some States that may have some challenges.

Here, in New Hampshire, we have one of the best, if not the best system in the country. We have a lot of confidence that our system is going to go off well. We've worked with a lot of different individual cities and towns to make sure they have what they need, they know what to expect. They understand the processes that we're putting in place, everything from safety processes to security of the election, itself. We do have a long tradition of well-run elections. And this year will be no exception.

And to be sure, this election looks different. And it definitely presents different challenges. The COVID-19 public health emergency is here. But we are very lucky that, just a couple months ago, we held

a primary election in September, which gave us all a chance to try some of these new procedures and protocols. And that election went incredibly smoothly. And that's why we have a lot of confidence that this Tuesday will also go just as smooth.

The Secretary of State has secured and distributed PPE and other safety materials to local Election Officials. Working with Dr. Chan and the folks over at the Department of Public Health, the State has provided a lot of guidance to the Election Officials through trainings, written guidance to make sure that the proper protocols for COVID-19 safety are followed.

Since April, we've made it very clear that the concerns surrounding COVID-19 are a basis to request an absentee ballot. So if an individual has a concern over COVID, they can absolutely request an absentee ballot. And our message was very simple that the people of New Hampshire should not have to choose between exercising their fundamental right to vote and protecting their health. And for months, as we've seen, voters have been encouraged to obtain absentee ballots.

Additionally, the Secretary of State and the Attorney General aligned other means for accessible voting, including the accessibility of that voting process on election day, itself. Our goal, again, is just very consistent, to provide all who are qualified to vote the means to do so in a manner that protects their health. It sounds repetitive, but we just want to make sure the point is very clear. If you have concerns about your health, we've made provisions. If you have concerns about the process, we've ensured the integrity of that process and that your vote is truly counted.

The technology, if you want to call it, that New Hampshire uses has really stood the test of time. And that technology is a pencil and paper. It has been tried and true for 200 years. We do it very well. It is un-hackable. Secretary Gardner always says you can't hack a pencil, and it's true. And I think that's one of the reasons we don't overcomplicate the system. We make it very easy for folks. And I think that sometimes the simplicity -- as a good Engineer will tell you, sometimes the simplest answer is the best one. And in this case, it's something that has been tried and true.

And we truly stand out across the country, as we did back in February with our first in the nation primary, after Iowa, we will just say, was not so successful. I think they're still counting votes out there, frankly. We got it right. And we nailed it. And the whole country, I think, took a big sigh of relief and said, okay, this can be done and should be done. And I think we raised the bar a little bit for all these other States to make sure that they have hopefully that same integrity of the process that we do.

We're going to have folks from the Attorney General's Office all across the State in the voting locations being able to answer questions and take care of any issues. They always do a great job. But there's a heightened sense in this election because of COVID. And so, we're going to make sure that we have enough folks out there to be dispatched.

Attorney General Gordon MacDonald and Anne Edwards are both here today. And they can answer any of your questions that you may have on the voting process or procedures, the flexibility. I've been out across the State over the past couple weeks. I've talked to Moderators and Town Clerks. And I have to say I've heard nothing but actually rave reviews for the individuals who have been just working tireless hours in both the Secretary of State's Office and the Attorney General's Office.

Secretary of State Gardner, Bud Fitch, the whole Team, just really doing a great job treating people as individuals, answering those questions one-on-one, and understanding it's not just part of a big system that mandates and dictates from above. We really are working with folks to make sure that it goes off as seamlessly as possible.

Oh, I guess there's one more thing we can talk about there. And it's just, yeah, the hotline. So if folks do have a question on election day, the Attorney General's Office will be operating its election

hotline, which is both open to voters and Election Officials. So regardless of your situation, you can use the hotline. It begins and opens at 6:00 a.m. on election day. The election hotline number, as you can see on your screen, is 1-866-868-3703 or -- I probably should have said this first -- 1-866-VOTER-03. Oh, I see that. Oh, I get it. I didn't quite get that at first, to be honest. VOTER-03, and you can also reach them by email at electionlaw@doj.nh.gov.

And for those who are voting in-person, we just want to ask for folks' patience. We're hoping. We don't know exactly what the weather is. Right now it looks like it'll be pretty good. So that's good. The lines could be a little longer. We're going to ask to make sure that people are spacing themselves out.

We're going to ask that people appreciate the provisions that are being made for folks, in terms of wearing masks, provisions if you don't want to wear a mask or there's a health issue why you can't wear a mask, and there's a requirement. There will be additional provisions made for those. So no one will be turned away. There'll be an opportunity for everyone and every vote will be counted. That's the real important piece here.

And if you have any questions, you have the hotline number right before you, the 868-3703 number. And we're here just to be able to talk to folks one-on-one and make sure that the whole process goes well.

So, I know that was quite extensive. Obviously, I think the voter stuff is pretty important. It's one day a year, or two days a year with the primary. And this year, there's just a lot of heightened concerns for a variety of different reasons. But I got to say the Team just did a great job this year to make sure we took care of that. With that, we can open up for questions. Good afternoon, Paula.

Q&A Session

How are you, Governor?

Governor Sununu:

How are you?

Good to see you.

Governor Sununu:

Nice to see you.

I have a question about guns at the polls. Do you have a message to people who would be carrying guns that there might be people who would consider that intimidation, if there's...

Governor Sununu:

The no change in our rules surrounding firearms at polling locations. Nothing has changed.

And then, a quick opposite story, yesterday members of the tourist attractions community met with Senator Shaheen to talk about their dire situation. They are worried that they're not going to be able to keep their fulltime people employed over the winter. And I wondered if, with the little money that we have left in the CARES Act, if there's anything there that could help the Story Lands of the world.

Governor Sununu:

Again, we have. So, New Hampshire's given more CARES Act funds to private businesses than any State in the country. The problem is that because Congress failed to do anything over the last six months having to do with the CARES Act, providing any more flexibility, that those funds have to be spent by December 31st.

So unfortunately that's the real problem. I think folks are concerned about January and February. And I'm with them. I'm concerned for them, as well. If Congress had actually done anything and done their job, I think we'd have a lot more flexibility and more provisions to extend some of these grant opportunities. And we could use those CARES Act dollars for exactly what you're expousing [ph].

So I'd love to know what Senator Shaheen actually said to them, because she was the one that turned down the \$500 billion. She was the one that said it's not enough and left the State with 0. So, I was pretty blunt on a national level the other day when I said I don't know if any of them deserve to come back, because since this whole pandemic broke out, since April, they've literally done nothing: not flexibility, not more funds. And so, they have to understand that there are individuals and there are businesses on the other end of their Policy or Policy inaction and their inability to actually find compromise, move things forward, and get some of the relief efforts where they need to go.

The pandemic's going to extend well-beyond December 31st. Whoever thought that this was going to just disappear on December 31st couldn't be more wrong. I think the numbers are just going to continue to go up. The issue's going to get more and more severe. That's why we're really emphasizing just to go back to the mask wearing, the social distancing, the hand hygiene, things that really have made a fundamental difference in our ability to manage the pandemic.

But at the same time, basically CARES Act ends on December 31st, effectively. Will a lame duck session of Congress actually do something between November and the end of December? I don't know. I don't have a whole lot of faith in that. I hope so, but one thing I've learned is don't count on it with those guys. So, it's unfortunate.

Can I follow up on Paula's polling-location question?

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

Either you or the Attorney General, have you guys have heard of -- is it on your radar, this idea of possibility of armed folks being at polling locations to protect those locations?

Governor Sununu:

I haven't heard anything about that. I'd refer to the Attorney General if maybe he has. But I don't think so.

And then, also is there any recourse for voters who may feel intimidated at the polling locations?

Attorney General MacDonald:

Good afternoon. We've had no credible threats, credible information about anything like that. If there is any concern, go back to what the Governor said. Call our hotline. Any information comes up before election day, we're answering that phone. Anything that comes up on election day, give us a call.

Can folks open carry at polling locations?

Attorney General MacDonald:

That is the law in New Hampshire.

Governor, we're talking about the increase in numbers. And this is kind of a two-tiered question that maybe you and the Commissioner, Commissioner Shibinette, could answer. Is there a sense of what's driving this? Is it everything from people traveling to New Hampshire to community spread? And does that mean complacency? And if you're finding in contact tracing that people are knowingly positive and going out into locations, is there any recourse for that, like the situation with the restaurant?

Governor Sununu:

Like a penalty to an individual, something like that?

Um-hmm.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so, I mean, I'll allow Dr. Chan, if he wants to come up and talk about it. I can tell you, from my perspective, that it is the fall. Our immune systems become a little more suppressed for a variety of reasons. We come indoors a little more. We're in more close contact with folks. We're not out in the fresh air as much. And that's a big contributor to it, as well.

Do I think that there's some complacency with folks? Yeah, I mean, it's COVID fatigue. We keep using that term now. But I think that's very real. I don't know many people who leave their house without a mask in their back pocket. So that's the good news. People do have it readily available.

I think people understand what we mean when we say social distancing. And I don't think folks are fighting back on that as much as you might have seen early on. The understand what it means and that it's not about us, as individuals. It's about who we're around, and maybe not appreciating or knowing the health situation of folks that might be around us. So I think folks also, while there may be a little complacency, I think folks also understand and have a better understanding of how their actions can affect others.

So it's that time of year. It really is. The flu's increasing. The common cold is increasing. I'll let the real Epidemiologist answer any further questions, in terms of what else might be driving it.

With the Fat Katz situation, though, or with someone knowingly going into a location knowing they're supposed to be in isolation, are there any kind of...

Governor Sununu:

I mean, right now, from a penalty situation, that's really handled by the Attorney General's Office. But right now I don't think there are any. That's a very slippery slope, if you start going down a path of if somebody went out and they knowingly infected folks, or whether they didn't know, what they knew and when, and that level of infection, who they actually infected. Were they responsible, or others?

It's an invisible virus, right? So it's very hard to determine exactly precisely sometimes. And sometimes you can. Sometimes it's very clear. Oh, I was with Uncle Bob. Uncle Bob had it and now I got it, right? But sometimes in those larger group settings, it's a little more unclear. So I'm not saying we wouldn't do it. But that's a very slippery slope to go down. And I think, as the numbers even get more and more, you're potentially going to have a few cases like that here-and-there unfortunately. But I'll let Dr. Chan talk to the viral spread.

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, good question. So let me start off by saying that the situations like we periodically hear about, where somebody knowingly goes out and is exposing other people after they've tested positive, is very, very rare, right? That is not what is driving this pandemic or one of the principle reasons this virus is spreading.

This is a virus that we still believe is spread primarily person-to-person through close contact to somebody's respiratory droplets, their respiratory secretions. So a lot of the recommendations that we continue to recommend -- the social distancing, the close facemask covering -- is intended to try and interrupt that transmission, person-to-person.

But we know that, as the Governor mentioned, that this is oftentimes a silent virus. People can be infected, might not have any symptoms, or very mild symptoms, and still be able to spread it to other people, which is why we continue to stress that even if people are feeling well, or only having maybe mild symptoms of a cold, everybody needs to still be practicing the social distancing and the cloth facemask use.

One of the things that we've seen is the epidemiology of this virus change over the course of the pandemic, right? So we're now eight months into this pandemic in New Hampshire, since we've identified our first case. Early on, a lot of the risk factors for acquiring this virus really was travel and outbreak-related, particularly outbreaks at long-term care facilities.

Through a lot of hard work on the part of the long-term care facilities, congregate-living settings, Public Health doing contact tracing, implementing the testing programs, many of those outbreaks have been brought under control. And the primary risk factors right now that we're seeing really are close contact to another person with COVID-19. That's tracked on our website. We make that data publicly available.

And I think that highlights the fact that, one, this virus is very easy to spread person-to-person; two, it requires close contact; and thirdly, people need to be taking the precautions and avoiding close contact with other people, even if they don't think they, themselves, are infected, or another person's infected. We know that this virus can transmit even between people that might be asymptomatic or only have mild symptoms.

Dr. Chan, before you leave, a couple of quick questions; what percentage of this -- there's been an argument over, well, is there a surge? Or are we tripling the tests? We talked about that a few weeks ago with the difference in positivity rate level. What percentage of the surge, or the increase in cases, are people who are asymptomatic who are being tested, just haven't tested yet, went out and got a test, versus say those kids and coaches connected to hockey, or the patrons of the restaurant? Or do we have a breakdown of kind of separating the mini outbreak cluster infection rates versus the people who are regularly getting testing, just find out if they had it when they don't know?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, so I don't have exact numbers for you. We know, based on testing in other situations in New Hampshire, like in long-term care facilities and even in school settings, as well as based on national data, that upwards of 30% to 40%-plus of people with COVID-19 are often asymptomatic, meaning without symptoms at the time of the test.

And so, going back to what I was saying earlier, we know that this is a virus that can spread silently. And it's one of the things that makes this virus so difficult control. It makes it difficult to control spread between people.

Regarding your question, though, regarding the increasing numbers, if I understand your question correctly, we have set a very low bar for people being tested, right? So, we've seen a lot of testing occurring in long-term care facilities. We have been working with our colleges and universities to do a lot of screening testing, even of asymptomatic people. And we've set the bar very low for excluding students and Staff from school and businesses who might even have only mild symptoms to go out and get tested.

So we've been doing a lot more testing the last several months. And as a result of that testing, probably we've been picking up more infection. But as we do more testing, we're finding more and more people that are infected.

And so, the increase is not just because we're doing more testing. We believe that there's actually increasing community spread that's out there. And part of the purpose of the contact investigation is that, when we identify somebody with COVID-19, we're continuing to investigate each and every person to identify close contacts. And we go out and have their close contacts tested, or recommend that close contacts get tested, so that we can break the chains of transmission.

And so, it's difficult to separate. We don't have current State-level data on the percentage of people that are symptomatic versus asymptomatic. But we know that asymptomatic infection can occur. As we do more testing, we're finding more people infected, both symptomatic and asymptomatic. But we

believe that that likely represents increase in community transmission because of the higher percentage that we're seeing reporting close contact to somebody else with infection.

A hypothetical on an asymptomatic person. So, let's say somebody caught it in April. They didn't get tested until last week. They don't believe they -- they've been safer at home, right? And we've had that rule. So, they would then get a notification to quarantine for two weeks. But technically they've had the virus for all of that time, potentially spreading it or not potentially spreading it. Where does the two-week time period by which they quarantine come into play where, okay, you found out that person was tested positive. They were quarantined. But they've been out and about, or quarantined, for months and still tested positive, even though they may have had a contact in April or whatever.

Dr. Chan:

So, we are not always able to identify how somebody becomes infected, or even necessarily when they become infected with the virus. And there's different testing technologies that are out there. It's very, very unlikely that somebody would be exposed back in April, for example, and test positive by these nasal swabs that we're doing to detect active infection. That is highly unlikely.

We have seen instances where people can have prolonged detection after they initially test positive. We believe that that's not likely live virus that's able to be transmitted to other people. But we address those on sort of a case-by-case basis.

But if somebody tests positive for the first time, even if they are asymptomatic, likely that indicates recent infection with the appropriate test, the appropriate swab. And so, that person who tests positive is going to be required to isolate. And then, we are going to contact that person to identify close contacts, so that we can get them tested and put them under quarantine.

And lastly, recently, about two or three weeks ago, there was a university study that was doing polling of people who were infected back in July and found that I think it was around 74% of the people who were questioned said they always wore a mask in public, or nearly often wore a mask in public, and still became infected. Are we collecting that data during our contact-tracing process? And do we share that with the university, so that a part of those numbers were New Hampshire and/or are we seeing that?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, so, again, it's very difficult to identify how somebody necessarily contracted the virus. Oftentimes, we're not collecting down to that level of detail, when we're doing our contact investigations. We're asking going back a period of time to ask about potential exposures and who they may have exposed. So for the sake of efficiency, we're not going back and asking about months and months of activity and whether they were wearing masks.

But I think that situation you highlight also highlights the fact that this virus can spread so easily. And so, even if somebody is doing a good job of wearing masks when in public and trying to social distance, if a person's household, or their roommate, for example, comes down with the virus can then spread to others in close proximity that the person might normally come into close contact with.

And so, that's how these types of viruses spread. That's how these pandemics are propagated or transmitted is person-to-person spread. And so, the goal is to try and build in the layers of protection so

that, if somebody becomes infected, they either don't spread it to anybody else, or limit the number of people that then they're spreading it to. Thanks.

Can I ask a quick question about your reaction to the Governor's decision to have restaurants create these lists? And what effectively, in terms of timing -- can we stop a spread with this kind of information? Or is it just kind of the additional, just your reaction?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, so, again, this is something that the State has been working with the Restaurant and Lodging Association around trying to implement additional protections and precautions into the business operations. So, this is a welcomed change, I think, from the Public Health standpoint into the guidance, because any information that we have in terms of who might be a close contact greatly facilitates our ability to do the contact tracing.

So a lot of the public announcements that you've heard over the last couple of weeks announcing potential exposures at restaurants is because we can't be assured that we know who's been in proximity to that person with COVID-19 while they were at the restaurant. And so, in those types of situations, we rely on press releases to try and identify additional people.

If we had the names and the contact information of at least individuals in the party that we could reach out to who were in proximity of someone with COVID-19 in a restaurant or lodging setting, we may not need to do those types of public press notifications. We would be able to reach out individually to the people that were in the establishment. And so, any type of information like that that we can get is welcomed from the Public Health investigation standpoint.

But from the public's perspective, we'd like to have a list of the restaurants, because I had a situation this week where my husband's law Partner went to a restaurant which was not named. And now everybody is wondering what's the level. We haven't gotten any public information about the closures in Plymouth. And that's been five days now, four or five days. Can you explain?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, I think it's important for people to realize that we will do -- and the Commissioner's talked about this, as well, that we do public notifications when there is a request to the public, or an action requested of the public, for example if we're not able to identify everybody that may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

A majority of the time, through our contact investigations, we are able to identify people who have been in close contact and do the individual outreach. So most of the time, there's not a need to do a public notification, because the majority of people that might have been in a particular location are not at-risk. We don't consider them at-risk.

I think it does highlight an important point, though, which is, as community spread, as community transmission increases around the State, there will be an increasing number of people increasing risk to individuals in the community. And you're not always going to do know who may or may not have

COVID-19 in your community, which highlights the point of needing everybody all the time to be practicing social distancing and close facemask use when in public settings, because we don't know who has COVID-19 all the time that we're out in a public setting and coming into contact with other people.

Can I just follow up with that really quick? But is it fair, though, for the public, or the press, to have to rely on the restaurant to tell us that, hey, we're closed this week because we had a COVID infection? And we appreciate you letting us know so we can let people know. But if the restaurant doesn't tell us and you don't tell us, because you're able to find everybody, we don't know. And we don't have the choice of being able to say -- whether it's the press or the public -- to be able to say, X restaurant was really busy. There were 100 people having drinks and not wearing masks and I don't really want to patronize a place that isn't going to be a little more careful and follow the rules, compared to...

Dr. Chan:

So each situation is different. And sometimes it takes a little bit of time for Public Health to do the contact tracing and get the information that we need. So there are situations where the restaurant, while we're doing the investigation, may take the step of making some public announcement and closing.

And on the backside of that, when Public Health does the contact investigation, if we feel that there is a need for public notification, we will do so, which you've seen play out over the last couple of weeks. But if we determine, in the course of that contact investigation, that we're able to identify everybody that was in close contact and there's not a need for a public notification, then we may not do a public notification.

So, I think what you're sometimes seeing and experiencing in the public setting is the investigation process play out, where the business is taking a proactive step of closing down maybe and notifying patrons, or the public, while Public Health conducts the contact investigation. So it's really a partnership between Public Health and the different businesses and organizations, schools, long-term care facilities in a community. And each situation oftentimes will dictate a different response.

Governor, with regard to ice hockey that's returning tomorrow, what level of confidence do you have that there are not going to be clusters that we found before? And could you speak a little bit about the public's response to the testing requirement?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, well, again, I think we've put new guidance into place for hockey. I think we're confident that it can work. But they have to follow the guidance. The guidance is designed to be successful. But, again, it's all incumbent upon the rink owners, the teams, the parents, the players, themselves, the adult teams. There's adults that play hockey, too, a lot of those. Everyone has to follow those rules and everyone has to get tested. And that's it.

And the response, I think, has been fairly positive, in that folks know. I mean, I've had a lot of parents call and say thank you, because they were feeling pressure to keep going into a situation that they didn't feel comfortable with. And I think a lot of folks understand this is a way to hit the reset button and hopefully save the rest of the season. But if it's followed, I think we can be very successful.

Governor, and so the testing is mandated, but players are still allowed to get tested through November 6th?

Governor Sununu:

Through next week, yes. So technically you could be on the ice today or tomorrow without a test. But you do have to do it within the next week. We had to create some flexibility. We couldn't say every player has to get tested on a certain day. So we're creating some flexibility, allowing them to get back on the ice, and also allowing the teams to figure out the protocol that they're going to use to make sure that they're collecting that information, as well.

But doesn't that, then, defeat the purpose of the whole testing round, if you can go back on the ice without getting a COVID test?

Governor Sununu:

No, well, you can go back on the ice for literally a couple days without getting it. So it's just a matter of providing some flexibility. So, again, you can't have every student and every player, every parent, Coach, and Referee get all tested in a single point in time. If you could, that would be great. But that's not really practical.

So, we wanted to get kids back on the ice, the season underway under the new guidance documents. The testing protocols, which, I think, allowing the antigen test provides a lot of flexibility. Folks can get the PCR test, if they want, and making sure the teams kind of are up-to-speed in terms of how to collect that data.

So it doesn't defeat the purpose at all. It just provides a little bit of a flexible window to make it successful for those individuals.

I thought that I heard today during the Open-Up Task Force that you had altered your guidance to make it a recommended?

Governor Sununu:

The test?

Yes.

Governor Sununu:

No, the test is mandatory. Yeah.

That's not what DJ said.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah. No, the test is mandatory. You can do either PCR or antigen. That's the flexibility that we provided. But the tests are required.

Governor, I think one of the surprises with the primary was that the results were almost normal. In other words...

Governor Sununu:

Are you talking about February or September?

I'm talking about September.

Governor Sununu:

September, yes, sorry.

That the numbers came in almost at a time when they usually come in; do you think that's likely on Tuesday? Or even here, is it probably going to be later when we actually know?

Governor Sununu:

I'm just kind of guessing. I'm going to guess it's going to be maybe a little later. But, again, I was pleasantly surprised. I think we all were that the -- I'm rounding here. I've gone through a few different elections. Usually about 90% of the cities and towns are reported by around midnight-ish, something like that. Maybe that goes a little later.

I remember back in the '80s, we were waiting until 2:00 in the morning sometimes to get a few of the results in. Got a little more efficient, as time went on, and maybe because of the number of absentees. But absentee ballots, they can start to count the absentee ballots I believe an hour after the polls open. And I think a lot of the cities and towns have staffed up for that to allow for that process, to know how that's going to be done.

So I think they're ready for it and they're prepared. I mean, I suppose it could take a little longer. But I think we're all going to be pleasantly surprised that it's pretty much as it usually is. Would you agree? Yeah, if Gordon MacDonald agrees, then you can take that to the bank.

I have a two-pronged question, but one for Dr. Chan, one for Commissioner Shibinette.

Commissioner Shibinette, when it comes to the long-term care facility concerns, as we see these numbers rise, is there also a sense that they will be okay, in terms of staffing? We know that they're already having an issue with LNAs and that kind of thing. If a surge would happen, are they prepared from that perspective? And if not, what can we do?

Commissioner Shibinette:

Sure, long-term care staffing has been a concern, God, as long as I was in long-term care. So, I can go back probably more than a decade and we had concerns with both Nurses and LNAs back more than a decade ago.

So, generally the concern is, when you start seeing facilities needing to quarantine and isolate Staff that have tested positive, we do have essential caregiver guidance in, if we get to that place, where we can allow COVID-positive Staff that are asymptomatic to take care of COVID-positive patients. And we did that in the spring.

I did see the Reports where we had less LNAs this year than what we did last year. A lot of our training was put on hold through the spring and the summer, because of COVID. I think that plays into it, for sure.

The State has a Contract where we've been providing supplemental staffing to facilities since probably April or May. So facilities that have had COVID outbreaks, if they have a large amount of their Staff quarantined or isolated, we can send Staff in. It's not a huge amount. Sometimes it's only six or eight people. But that's usually enough to get people through that really busy time when they have outbreaks.

We have housed long-term care Staff in hotels since probably April, people that have been exposed and didn't want to go home to the family. So we're doing everything we can to help with the staffing crisis in long-term care.

I think that there's going to be more to be done probably coming at the tail-end of the pandemic. We're going to have to look at how we can supplement and how we can create some innovative training programs to get them staffed back up. But this has been an ongoing issue in long-term care for over a decade. And I think COVID-19 just highlighted it even more.

I just wanted to ask the Attorney General a question about Fat Katz in Hudson.

Attorney General MacDonald:

Fat Katz, I know.

The investigation there, I didn't know if there was any update on that particular situation. I know that a fine was issued. And also, is there going to be some sort of protocol for someone who knowingly breaks quarantine, is positive, and still...

Attorney General MacDonald:

As far as I know, there's no update on Fat Katz. And the second question?

Yeah, just so if someone tests positive, they break quarantine knowingly and exposes other folks, is there going to be some sort of a penalty or a fine for people who do that in the future?

Attorney General MacDonald:

It's not an issue we've taken up yet. And I think we're going to -- we assess stuff like that on a case-by-case basis.

Attorney General MacDonald, while you're there, you've only had to issue a few fines. Are you surprised that it's been so few and that most people followed? And are the fines the right amount of money? Or should they be -- I mean, obviously if there were 100, you might want them to be higher to prevent that.

Attorney General MacDonald:

Well, our enforcement strategy from the get-go has been really to engage and work with businesses and individuals to achieve compliance. And when we go to an enforcement action like a fine, it's when those other strategies haven't worked. And the reason why we've had so few fines and so few relatively extreme enforcement strategies is New Hampshire's cooperated. They've engaged. They've worked with us. We have achieved compliance in overwhelming number of cases that have come to us.

If there are more cases in the next few weeks, might we see some more fines issued to businesses that some investigation has now kind of led to?

Attorney General MacDonald:

Again, we're going to take this on a case-by-case basis. Are we hearing more concerns from people calling into our hotline? Absolutely, we are. But, we take every single one of those on an individual and case-by-case basis.

Governor Sununu:

Great, thanks, Gordon. Do we have some questions on the phone?

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Hi, my question is about contact tracing. I'm wondering if you could talk about when you're trying to get information from people, how often are you running into a reluctance to share details? I mean, New Hampshire is a State where voters just a few years ago approved an Amendment to the Constitution creating a new right of privacy. So are you often encountering folks who you suspect might not be being fully open about where they've been and who they've been with?

Commissioner Shibinette:

Hi, thank you for the question. This is Commissioner Shibinette. I think a bigger issue with contact tracing is actually getting people to answer their phone and return our calls. That has probably been the single biggest issue when it comes to contact tracing. I think I heard yesterday that about 40% to 50% don't answer our initial call. And then, we have to make multiple calls.

But we do get in touch with everybody. And not everybody realizes that if we attempt to contact you, if we know that you're COVID-positive, or you are a close contact and at high risk, because you were a close contact of someone with COVID, if we cannot get you by phone, we do have an in-person team that will go and door knock at your house to notify you and to let you know that we're going to ask you to quarantine.

So probably the most time-consuming thing is getting people to return our call, not as much people refusing to give us information. With that said, I don't know that we would know how, right? Unless they are outwardly saying, I'm not giving you any information, very easily people can say that they don't have close contacts. There's no way for us to disprove that. So we do have to trust what people are telling us. And New Hampshire citizens have been very good about giving us the information we need when they call us back.

Governor Sununu:

Thank you. What's the caller ID? Is it like a big flashing, the Government is calling and needs information? I mean, maybe we should check the called ID. It's Lori, just calling to say hi. Might get a better response that way, I don't know. Okay.

Rick Green with The Laconia Daily Sun:

Two-part question: this month, you disagreed with the President's advice not to be afraid of COVID-19. You seem to disagree with his response to a white supremacy question. You've been critical of some of the Federal PPE response. You don't go to his rallies. Given all that, do you continue to support the President for reelection? And if so, why? Also, how high do case numbers have to get before you will consider a statewide mask mandate, or is there a reason why this is off the table?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, first question, I do support the President. As far as the statewide mask mandate, we've never said anything is off the table. If we have to play that, I would call it, in a way, it's almost like one of the final cards you can play, or even going back to a Stay-At-Home Order. We don't want to go back to that level.

But regionally, when you look at the State, that happens in the southern tier and what happens in other counties can be very, very different. So, we've always been very supportive of any locality that wants to implement a statewide mask mandate. That's their choice and we are supportive of that, knowing that certain cities and towns, especially in the southern tier, just have a much higher prevalence of it. And there's over 50% of our cities and towns in New Hampshire that have no COVID whatsoever.

So, from my perspective, I really have to make the decision to do that and to play that card on a statewide level. And we're just not there right now, which is the good news, with 1% of the folks just even being tested, about 1%, 1.25%, 1.3% of folks being tested at a positivity rate.

Back in March, I mean, if you were to extrapolate the numbers out, while I was listening to Dr. Chan, I was running math in my head. We had a percent-positivity rate of approximate 10%, 15%, right? I think it even hit close to 20% at one point. And we were doing 500, 600 tests a day, right? So that's why we'd have like 100 positive cases out of, let's say, 500 tests run that day.

If you were to extrapolate that out today, that would be the equivalent of 2,000 positive cases today, right? So, I mean, that's why we focus on the percent-positivity, because there were just so many folks that just weren't even getting tested back then. I mean, my guess -- and it's just a guess, of course. But I think the rate of infection was still much higher back in March than it is today. So we're not quite there yet.

It's not just about the whole number of cases. We really reiterate that point. Because we're doing so much more testing, because we have so much data available, we're catching asymptomatic folks. We don't have an exact percentage. But we're catching asymptomatic folks at a much higher rate.

If you were asymptomatic back in March and April, you were lucky to get a test. You probably weren't getting a test because there were so few. You had to have symptoms and meet certain criteria, even just to get a test.

So looking at the data and looking at the models, and what works and what doesn't, I'd also remind folks I think masks very much work. I think folks need to be very concerned. We want social distancing. But also remember that you still have a lot of States with mandated mask orders whose numbers are still sky high, still through the roof.

So it isn't a end-all, be-all answer to everything. If that were the case, some of these States like California and Washington, and Oregon, and you'd go down the list of States with statewide mask mandates, and their numbers are still outrageously high.

So it's really about behavior. The Government can only do so much to change an individual's behavior. We can create pathways. We can create guidance. You can mandate masks, if you want. But at the end of the day, an individual's overall behavior towards the virus and what they're going to change in their daily lives, everyone's a little bit different. And we all have to take that responsibility on very seriously.

When I look at those other States we talked about earlier that were in our position six weeks ago and have sky-high rates today, some of those States have mandated mask orders in them. Some of them don't. But that's one of the reasons I go back to your statement of, yes, you should be afraid. You should be concerned. When you're deciding to make plans for Thanksgiving, when you're deciding to make plans to meet with friends, when you're deciding how you're going to interact, whether it's going grocery shopping or out to dinner, whatever it is, you have to make the best decisions for yourself, but also make decisions, given that we are so well in this pandemic.

It is not going away anytime soon. We're going to be well-into this into 2021, as a vaccine gets out there. Folks will have some flexibility. But it's going to be a while. It's going to be a while. And so, anything we can do to, I think, just reappraise where we really are, where we're potentially going to go, the numbers are going to keep going up, I think, for quite a while. And we can manage it. We can manage it all the way through. But we all really have to take that responsibility upon ourselves in terms of what behaviors we're going to change in our lives to make sure that, as a State, we continue to manage it as a whole.

Michael Graham at the New Hampshire Journal:

Thanks so much. Two questions: the first one has to do with the restaurant mandate you just announced about gathering information from customers. Do you expect restaurants to turn people away who decline to give their name and contact information? And do you expect either Police or the Health Department to punish, or sanction, restaurants who decline to gather the information? That's my first question.

Governor Sununu:

Well, I would say this was a recommendation and request from the restaurants, from the Restaurant Association. So I would think that they're the ones making the request to the State to require this. So I would think that they're well onboard.

I don't think we're looking to send Police out to restaurants who aren't doing it. We'd probably lean on the Restaurant Association to work with their membership to ensure that it's being done exactly as they designed it to be.

I mean, it helps us, because it helps, I think, streamline the contact-tracing process. It helps them because it potentially gets rid of some of the wider public notifications. We can be very quick and explicit about how we go about the contact tracing.

So, given that it's their request, I definitely expect folks to comply. We're not looking to punish people, per se. But I think as those cases come up, we can take them on a case-by-case basis. We will keep working with the Association to make sure they're working with their membership to implement the guidelines and the rules that they've now requested of us.

Michael Graham at the New Hampshire Journal:

And then the second question is: your fellow Governor, Gavin Newsom, in California has issued restrictions for Thanksgiving, saying no more than three different families can be together, a brother, his wife, sister, wife, that kind of thing; that masks must be worn inside, except for immediately while eating; and that drinking, singing, chanting, and shouting are strongly discouraged. Do you plan on singing at your Thanksgiving this year, Governor? And more seriously, do you plan on issuing any edicts or restrictions to New Hampshire on how they can gather for Thanksgiving, as California has done?

Governor Sununu:

I don't sing at Thanksgiving. I can tell you that. So, I'm not going to comment on Governor Newsom's edicts, so to say. I can simply tell you here, in New Hampshire, we're going to keep a very strong message of making sure people take their gatherings responsibly.

I can tell you what I'm going to do. I'm from a very large family: seven brothers and sisters, and dozens and dozens of nieces and nephews. And often, we will all get together, whether it's for Thanksgiving or Christmas. Christmas is right around the corner, as well.

This year, we're kind of all doing our own thing, right? We're keeping it separate, keeping it in our immediate families, because there's just no need to take that risk. I think it's a small sacrifice to say we're not going to travel. We're not going to get involved in large groups. All the kids go to different schools. All the parents work, for the most part, in different locations. So that just adds that domino effect of risk that you're bringing into play.

I have elderly parents. They're 81. I know my father still thinks he's 29. But they're a little bit older and we have responsibility to them and who they might come in contact with, as well. So, it is really a domino effect and we're asking people to make these sacrifices.

I don't think they're so severe that they can't be managed at an individual level. And be smart about what you do. Be smart about wearing masks, maintaining social distancing when you can, staying within your immediate family. Those are the types of things that we're going to encourage. But we don't have any plans to mandate what happens in your home, per se. Okay. Paula, I'm sure there's good follow-up there.

Yeah, actually we want to talk about trick-or-treating. What are you going to be? What are you giving out at your house? And what is the advice you give to people across the State?

Governor Sununu:

So what am I going to be? There's little controversy in my house what I'm going to be, because often I don't get to choose what I am. Sometimes Leo or my kids will kind of dictate what they're going as.

Leo is one of your kids.

Governor Sununu:

Yes, Leo's my little guy, my eight-year-old. So we're going to have some fun. I don't know exactly. It's still a little bit up in the air. I was told I should be Mink the Bear or maybe Frankie the Fox, the animals. We tend to be very into animals in our house.

I can tell you we kind of have two choices in terms of chocolate: Hershey's, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, Kit-Kats, Hershey bars, Hershey, and always the miniature size. The big ones, that's just arrogant. I don't know. I don't go for that at all. Nobody should, by the way. But that's just speaking as a neighbor. And then, we always have the basket with the Sour Patch Kids and the Swedish Fish, and the more fruity-type stuff, as well.

Not the chocolate.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, but I went all out. I have to say it's been a bit of a stressful couple weeks, or eight months, however you want to put it. And so, I did go out. I was late at night. I'm sure I kept my family up to the wee hours with the power tools.

But I built a little graveyard and it was a nice stress relief. I actually went all out on my Halloween decorations this year. So we have tombstones and graveyards, and ghosts, and all that kind of stuff. And I went and got some lights.

So I normally don't do that. But I'm getting into the Halloween spirit this year, for sure. And we're building a little chute just to keep the 6 feet. It's fun, actually. I think it's pretty cool. I love the idea of

sending candy down a chute into the kids' bags. I think that'll be pretty cool, through a little trick-or-treat skeleton head.

So people are being very innovative, right? I think they are. So you can do it safely. We want people to be safe. Wear masks. It's for a couple hours. It's mostly outdoors. I think the weather will be nice. We want people just to be safe.

And it's a two-way street in terms of the safety factor, too. If you don't feel comfortable going out, don't go out. There's lots of innovative ways to celebrate Halloween, if you don't feel comfortable going out. And if you don't want people coming and knocking on your door, don't turn on the light, right? So, it takes two to tango, so to say. But I think it can be done safely and everyone can still have a good time.

Quick question for Dr. Chan: when it comes to the hockey testing, are you able to break those numbers out, because it would seem that that would be a real good opportunity for some surveillance testing? You're talking about thousands of people in a sort of similar scenario. So are you breaking that data out at all?

Dr. Chan:

Good question about the hockey testing; so we are asking. So, actually, a couple points here. When people go and register to get tested, we are not asking why they're getting tested. We don't generally ask why people are tested.

So, all of the people who are negative and being tested because of the hockey requirements, we're not collecting data on that. But if somebody is positive, we are asking whether they're getting tested and associated with hockey or not, so that there may be some information and data forthcoming about the number of people testing positive who are associated with hockey or indoor ice arena sports. But I don't have those numbers currently for you. Yes, thanks.

Governor Sununu, during the presidential primary, I got to speak to a number of the candidates during the course of the first in the nation, and basically I let them give them spiel. And I had one question for them which was: if they were elected, what would they do to heal the national divide? There's been a lot of discussion, including questions from the press to you about Donald Trump. And people have said the last four years have been a lot of civility. But anybody over the age of 30 knows that this divide has been with us for a long time: 9/11, the Bush/Gore election, when your dad was in the White House. It goes back quite a bit of time. Lately it seems that that has really trickled down into the State level, maybe not as bad as the national level. But there's still a lot of that. If you win on Tuesday, what specifically will you do to bring people together and try and heal that divide, so we can move forward, regardless of what happens at the national level?

Governor Sununu:

Well, a couple things, I mean, I would say that I think the national divide, if you really want to put the -- or just to comment on the way you phrased the question, the historical perspective. I think the real national divide happened in a couple phases.

It first happened in 2006, when you had a lot of the antiwar stuff happening. And then, 2008, it took, I think, a very different turn and it translated into the election and then ultimately in Washington. And then, obviously around 2015/2016, you started seeing a lot of the racial unrest, the issue of social

justice issues across this country. That started around 2015/2016. Law Enforcement was really under attack, frankly, from a lot of folks; and then where it has gone today. So you've seen a couple different levels of it.

I'm a big believer, you got to lead by example. You got to lead by example. You got to just call the balls and strikes like you see them. I'm not saying everyone has to be an Independent. Everyone has to be down the middle. It's okay to be a strong Republican or a strong Democrat. That's perfectly fine. And culturally, right? It's not just politics. It's in our culture, just how we talk to folks.

I think I've always said -- people have heard me say that social media is the bane of human existence, right? I use it all the time and I'm telling you it's terrible, because somehow, along the line, we got to the point where we thought it was okay to talk to someone in this negative way through the cyber bullying and all of that kind of stuff. We thought that if we were not looking at them in the eye, we can say whatever we want. And you can't. You really can't do it.

So, if you've seen, just from the political side, my campaign is positive. I don't do negative ads. If you see what we posted online, we don't talk about our opponents in negative ways. We talk about Policy, of course, Policy differences. That's fine. But we really try to stay aboveboard on all of it, in a very positive way.

And so, I just try to lead by example. That's all you really can do. It doesn't mean I'm going to change my Policy positions or my philosophy, or anything. But I always try to approach things with a smile. I always try to approach things with an open mindset. And the issues that really need to be addressed are ones where we just throw politics aside.

I'm one of the only Governors in the country that has to get elected every two years. Phil Scott's the other one in Vermont. And it stinks. I mean, I don't like campaigning. And one philosophy I adopted as soon as I got elected in 2016 was ignore the politics. That helps you get a lot of stuff done. When you let politics come into play as a variable in the decision-making, well, it never comes out better, right? It's usually a negative and usually breaks down discussion and all that. So if you ignore politics, you just get so much more done. And then, around the campaign, you can talk about the successes and you let the chips fall where they may.

But you got to do it in a positive way. You got to treat people with respect. The great, I think, analogy that people give a lot is Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan really battling it out but still playing cards at the end of the day and all of that, and leaving it where it belongs, leaving it at work, so to say. And sometimes that can be a great way to just take a step back, get some perspective, have an empathetic understanding.

I mean, the vast majority of folks that are in Congress, as frustrated as I am with Congress in doing nothing, they ran for office. They want to help. They believe strongly in where their positions are will help our country, just like our local House and Senate. People believe very strongly. They're not there -- for the most part, I can't speak for everyone, but for negative reasons, for nefarious reasons. They really just want to help their communities. We might just have a completely different understanding and path to go about it.

I think when you approach the situation from that point, that I might be in a room with 100 as left-leaning liberals as you can find, they all just want to help their communities. And when you, I think, start at that approach that we all want ultimately the same thing, the same goals, which is just better services and better leadership for our citizens, I think that just helps the conversations go a little smoother.

Sometimes you got to veto things. Sometimes you got to push back. Sometimes you can have the most heated arguments. I mean, the most heated arguments I've had politically are with Republicans on certain things.

You've heard me give this analogy, too. It's like Thanksgiving dinner. The toughest, most outrageous arguments I've had are usually with our family, right, behind closed doors sometimes. There's that comfort level. And that's okay. You hash it out. You look at data. Sometimes you win some. You lose some, and you move on. You can always move on.

There's no single issue that defines this country. There's no single issue that defines who we are as individuals. It's a collective of all these issues coming together. But most importantly, it's how we approach all of them, as a whole, that I think really has to fundamentally change.

I try to lead by example. And I live in the positive. I just don't work well in negative atmospheres, because leadership is about inspiring folks, inspiring folks to put more ideas on the table, to give 110% around what they want to do. You never do that by bringing people down. You don't inspire anyone to better leadership by knocking them down. You do it by bringing them too and allowing them to put everything they got on the table.

And then, you kind of hash out some of those details. Usually you can get it done. I mean, people can knock -- there were 80 vetoes by Governor Sununu. Sure, there were lots of taxes and fees, and surcharges, and like over \$1 billion in those Bills. Of course I vetoed those.

But don't forget, in 2019, with a Democrat Legislature, I also signed more Bills than I think in any single year Governor Hassan did. And that's not a knock on Governor Hassan, by any means. But we got a lot done, right? We found common ground on a lot of things, right?

When the Republicans held the Legislature in 2017 and 2018, that's when we had the greatest expansion of Medicaid. For five years, we secured that deal and made sure that we weren't going to renege on the deal of healthcare for our citizens. We got everything from preexisting conditions done this year. Well, Senator Feltes and myself, both testified on the same Bill around prescription medication and we got that Bill done together. We did the insulin cap, became the lowest-priced insulin State together, as Republicans and Democrats; the cost-of-living increase together.

I think we've gotten a lot of things done together. Doesn't mean you sacrifice your principles and philosophy; but I think the approach is everything. And frankly, I just think Washington could learn a thing or two from New Hampshire, to be blunt about it.

Governor, there's a cyber attack affecting a bunch of hospitals including Vermont. Any impact in New Hampshire? And do you know if New Hampshire is providing care for any folks with...

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so we're well-aware of the ransomware attacks that have affected various healthcare institutions around the country. I think there was one in neighboring Vermont. At this time, there does not appear to be any direct impact to the State of New Hampshire healthcare institutions, at this time, or State Government.

But our Team is right on it. We're talking to the folks in Vermont. We're talking to folks nationally. Commissioner Denis Goulet and his Team, and the folks, as part of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, where we do a lot of our cyber security for the State Government Entities, especially, they've been right on it.

We're also blessed in having one of the most skilled groups in the National Guard in terms of cyber security, are the men and women of the National Guard here in New Hampshire are some of the best in the country, frankly. And so, we can rely on them, as well.

So we're very aware of it, no immediate attacks, or immediate threats known to the State, at this time. But we're working with everyone to find out exactly what happened and making sure that we have the provisions in place to provide protections for ourselves, as well.

Okay. Wow, that was a long one. We appreciate it, but there's a lot going on, very kind of intense time of the year. But, again, I think if we all just remember what New Hampshire's all about and keep our heads about us, both through the election with COVID, responsibility to our family and coworkers, and stay positive, amongst all things, I think those are a lot of the ingredients in the recipe to our success.

So, we will be back with another press conference next week, next Thursday. We will see what everything looks like by then. I think we will all be thankful that the election's over. And again, we have a lot of confidence that the men and women with the Town Moderators and their Clerks, working with the Attorney General's Office, the Secretary of State's Office, they've done a phenomenal job. A big, big thank you to all of them.

There's a hotline, if folks have any questions about voting. But we want folks to go vote, regardless of Republican, Democrat, Independent. Please, please, please go out and vote. It really, really is important. It's the most important part of the process is the ability for the citizens to engage. And we take, frankly, a lot of pride -- not just pride in that, but that's such we're having the most representative body of Government in the country. It really is important that everyone get out there.

And they could do it safely and with integrity. And the votes will be counted, right, Gordon? He says they'll be counted. We're going to be good on Tuesday night. Thank you, guys, very much. Have a great Halloween, not Thanksgiving yet. Halloween, Paula; and I will let you know what I decide to dress up as. I'm not sure when the -- I will send you a picture. Maybe I'll send you a picture of the graveyard or something. But we will see. Thank you, guys.