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Video, Audio, Photos & Rush Transcript: Amid Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Governor Cuomo Announces Seventh Region Hits Benchmark to Begin Reopening Tomorrow

Capital Region Joins Western New York, Central New York, North Country, Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and Mohawk Valley Regions, Which Have Met the Seven Metrics Required to Begin Reopening

Nassau County is Now Eligible to Resume Elective Surgeries and Ambulatory Care

Announces Collaboration with GNYHA & HANYS to Implement a Two-Week Hospital Visitation Pilot Program in 16 Hospitals Across the State to Allow Increased Visitations for Family Members

State Will Allow Memorial Day Ceremonies with 10 People or Less

Calls on FDA to Make Sure That Pharmaceutical Corporations That Produce a COVID-19 Vaccine Release the Rights to Provide for Immediate Widespread Distribution

Confirms 1,474 Additional Coronavirus Cases in New York State - Bringing Statewide Total to 352,845; New Cases in 42 Counties

Governor Cuomo: "Memorial Day is coming up. That is an important American tradition. We want to honor our veterans and we want to make sure that no matter what happens we are still honoring our veterans. The state will allow ceremonies, local ceremonies of up to 10 people or less. We hope that those ceremonies are broadcast, televised in their areas so people can be a part of honoring that tradition. Local governments can make a decision that they don't want those ceremonies to happen, they don't want 10 people gathering."

Cuomo: "If you don't fund New York state government, you know what that means? That means I have to cut aid to Northwell, to hospitals, to nurses, to doctors. It means I have to cut aid to local governments that fund police and firefighters. I have to fund funding to schools, teachers, who have also been heroes doing remote learning, et cetera. It's about priorities. It's about values. And I understand the large corporations are the ones who fund the political accounts of these elected officials. But let them remember, that they get elected by the people. People still vote. People still matter. Show the same consideration for the workers that you showed for the corporations."

Earlier today, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced that the Capital Region has met all seven metrics required to begin phase one of the state's regional phased reopening plan starting tomorrow, joining the Western New York, Central New York, North Country, Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and Mohawk Valley Regions. The Capital Region has now identified enough contact tracers to meet the state's guidelines, and the tracers are being trained today in preparation for Western New York

entering phase one, which includes construction; manufacturing and wholesale supply chain; retail for curbside pickup and drop-off or in-store pickup; and agriculture, forestry and fishing. Business guidance for phase one of the state's reopening plan is available [here](#). A guide to the state's "NY Forward Reopening" Plan is available [here](#). The state's regional monitoring dashboard is available [here](#).

Governor Cuomo also announced that Nassau County is now eligible to resume elective surgeries and ambulatory care. The Governor previously announced that the state will allow elective outpatient treatments to resume in counties and hospitals without significant risk of COVID-19 surge in the near term, and a total of 50 counties can now resume elective surgeries.

The Governor also announced a collaboration with the Greater New York Hospital Association and the Healthcare Association of New York State to implement a two-week hospital visitation pilot program in 16 hospitals across the state to allow increased visitations for family members and loved ones. As part of the pilot program, visits will be time limited and visitors will be provided with and must wear PPE and are subject to symptom and temperature checks.

The Governor also announced the state will allow Memorial Day ceremonies of 10 people or less statewide, with final decisions about ceremonies being left to local governments. The Governor also encouraged vehicle parades in honor of veterans for Memorial Day.

The Governor also called on the FDA to take steps now to make sure that pharmaceutical corporations that produce a COVID-19 vaccine release the rights to the vaccine to provide for immediate widespread distribution and help ensure the vaccine is available to all individuals.

VIDEO of the Governor's remarks is available on YouTube [here](#) and in TV quality (h.264, mp4) format [here](#).

AUDIO of today's remarks is available [here](#).

PHOTOS will be available on the Governor's Flickr [page](#).

A rush transcript of the Governor's remarks is available below:

Good afternoon. It's my pleasure to be on Long Island this afternoon. I'll wear a mask out of respect for my fellow New Yorkers. And today at Northwell, I wear a mask to also say thank you to the nurses and the doctors and the healthcare professionals that did so much work, saved so many lives. The least we can do is wear a mask to stop infections. It's not overly intrusive, it's not overly invasive, you can make a fashion statement. I picked blue today to match my blue suit. I didn't really do that, it's just the only one I had. Let me introduce the people who are here. To my left, far left, Dr. Jim Malatras. To my immediate left, Michael Dowling, who is the president and CEO of Northwell Health, who has done just an extraordinary job, the whole team at Northwell has been extraordinary in what they've done for the entire state, not just Long Island, not just downstate New York, Northwell is the largest healthcare system in the state, and they really stepped up to help the entire state. And Michael, and the leadership he's brought to Northwell, and because he knows healthcare, New York State the way he does, former health commissioner in charge of health for the State of New York. He's really been a fantastic asset, I want to thank him. To my right, Melissa DeRosa, to her right, Robert Mujica, budget director for the State of New York.

And as I said, it's a pleasure to be on Long Island, it's a beautiful day. It's that bittersweet reality that we're living in. The news is good today, the weather is good, so it's good to be here. But, I'm not out on the water, I'm not fishing off the south shore of Long Island, I'm not fishing off the north shore of Long Island. Normal days, I would have been doing that by now. Little break, little piece of sanity. But the news is good. Total hospitalizations declined again. This is an important lesson, though. What you see here, you'll almost in every state across the country, you'll see in almost every country across the globe. Look how fast that spike comes, look how fast that incline is, how steep the incline is, and then look at how slow, relatively, that decline is. You can get into trouble quickly with this virus and it takes you a longer time to turn that curve and to turn that infection rate. So, don't let a spike happen in the first place, learned that lesson, got it.

Net change in total hospitalizations down, change in intubations down, number of new cases, this is an important number that we track, down again, 335. That's on a system of 53,000 so that's really good news. Number of deaths, again, on a

relative scale, the number is down. It's down dramatically from where it was in the first place, but it's still painfully high. We are basically back to where we started before this tragedy descended upon us. It didn't actually descend upon us, it actually came from people in Europe, which nobody told us, nobody knew. We all thought the virus was in China, and everybody was talking about watch China, watch China, watch China. Well the virus had left China and gone to Europe and came here from Europe. 3 million European visitors came on flights to JFK or Newark airports between January, February, March. The Europe travel ban started mid-March. By that time, 3 million Europeans had come. That's another lesson we have to learn. We're now all excited and talking about reopening. We have all the data-driven metrics that can tell you exactly where we are in terms of reopening across the state. Albany, Capital Region, which has met many of the health metrics has to get their tracers up and running. We've been working with them to do that. They need 383 tracers, they found 430 working together so that's great news. This whole testing, tracing, testing, tracing - we use these words like people would know what they mean. We've never done testing on this scale, we've never done tracing on this scale. We'll have thousands of tracers who follow-up after the testing statewide. They're now being trained today and Capital Region should open tomorrow.

Long Island is making great progress. Long Island, we were losing about 100 residents per day. We're now down to about 13 per day. When someone asks, "Well why did we go through all this pain for 2 months, 3 months?" Because we saved lives, that's why. Because we saved lives. And if we didn't do what we did, that number of 100 per day would have kept going up. That's why we did what we did. Did it work? You're darn right it worked. We've saved many, many lives and you look at the curve in New York versus the rest of the nation, we're going down, many parts of the nation, the curve is still going up.

Nassau County is now eligible for elective surgery and ambulatory care. Anyone who needs health service should get it. There's no reason not to go to the hospital. No reason not to go to the doctor's office. Many reasons why you should go. Denial is not a life strategy. If you have an issue, get it tested, get it resolved. We're also looking at a pilot program over the next two weeks to start to bring visitors back to hospitals. That's going to be run by the Greater New York Hospital Association, Downstate and Health Association of New York State Upstate. There will be a number of hospitals participating in that. Northwell has a number of hospitals. This is getting visitors back into hospitals with the right precaution, with the right

equipment. It is terrible to have someone in the hospital and that person is isolated, not being able to see their family and friends. I understand the health reasons for that, we were afraid of the virus spread, but this is a pilot project to see if we can bring visitors in and do it safely.

We're now taking steps to do further reopening with fewer crowds. I'm very aggressive on encouraging sports teams to start and to operate without fans. This is more an economic calculus for different sports. Some sports franchises can make this work easier than others. It depends on the economics of that sport and how much is determined by selling seats in the arena or the stadium, et cetera. To the extent they can start, I encourage them to start. The state will work with them to start. Downstate, we have a number of sports teams. When a team plays, even if there's no one in the stands, it gets broadcast and that gives people at home entertainment value, something to participate in. Another reason, frankly, to stay home as opposed to go out and staying home is good right now so I encourage the sports teams, and again, New York will be a full partner, anything we can do to make it happen and make it happen safely, we will.

Memorial Day is coming up. That is an important American tradition. We want to honor our veterans and we want to make sure that no matter what happens we are still honoring our veterans. The state will allow ceremonies, local ceremonies of up to 10 people or less. We hope that those ceremonies are broadcast, televised in their areas so people can be a part of honoring that tradition. Local governments can make a decision that they don't want those ceremonies to happen, they don't want 10 people gathering. Ten is the CDC guideline, is for 10 people gathering. That's where the state got the recommendation from the federal CDC. But I can understand the difference of opinion so we'll leave it up to local government.

Vehicle parades I think are appropriate and should be encouraged and again, this is an important tradition. Many people lost their lives. This is important to many, many families all across this state and nation. It's important to the veterans that they be recognized and I think we can do that and I think we can do it safely.

New Yorkers are doing everything they can as a people. Our response has been probably the most demanding in the country because we had the largest number of cases but every step of the way New Yorkers have stepped up. As a government we are doing everything that we can. We're doing more testing than any other state. We've been more aggressive than any state in nursing home precautions. So we have been smart. New Yorkers have been smart. The government has been smart and that should be respected and now we need a federal government that is as smart as the people who elected that federal government because New York, to move forward and move forward quickly we need a federal government as a partner.

They're now in the midst of running a number of programs that provide cash benefits to corporations. Let's make giving those corporations funding that the corporations are actually acting on behalf of Americans. I proposed something called the Americans First Law. Not America First, Americans First Law. We learned the hard way in 2008 that you can see government provide billions of dollars to corporations to quote unquote stabilize the economy. We did this after the mortgage scandal. We gave billions to the banks, remember? Because they were too big to fail. So we had to give billions of dollars to the banks. What did the banks do? Many of them turned around and gave themselves bonuses and they gave themselves parties and end of year bonuses and special pay bonuses. These are the same banks that created the mortgage fraud in the first place, then get bailed out by the taxpayer and wind up having parties at taxpayer expense. I fear what they're going to do this time is they'll take the money from government but then they'll lay off workers. They're already talking about it.

You see these corporations talking about getting lean and restructuring. That means downsizing. Why? Because they think they have an opportunity. Now, many of the employees have been laid off temporarily, or temporarily at home, the corporations think this is an opportunity to reopen with fewer employees. It would be such a scandal if corporations now took taxpayer dollars and then laid off workers, and reopened. It would be such a scandal, and a fraud if these corporations were allowed to receive government money, lay off workers, and then government taxpayers had to subsidize the workers who were laid off. So, my law is very simple. If you take government funds, you must rehire the same number of workers you had pre- pandemic. If you take government funds, you must rehire the same number of employees you had pre-pandemic. If

you want to lay people off, if you want to get lean, if you want to restructure, fine. But don't use taxpayer money to subsidize it and don't think taxpayers are going to pay you to lay off employees and then wind up with an unemployment problem at the end of the day.

That's what happened in 2008. I was attorney general. I brought the cases afterwards. I brought actions against AIG and against banks like Bank of America that took these bailout funds, and then gave themselves bonuses and parties. Don't make the same mistake twice. The American taxpayers are doing what they have to do. Don't make fools of the American taxpayers.

Second, Washington was very quick to fund businesses and corporations. The bills they passed thus far have been about funding corporations and businesses to keep, to prop up the economy. Fine, who did they not fund? They didn't fund state governments and local governments. Who do state and local governments fund? They fund the hospitals. They fund the police. They fund the firefighters. They fund the school teachers. They fund the food banks. Why was Washington so quick to fund the corporations and the big businesses, but now they have to think about whether or not they want to fund state governments and local governments, the hospitals, the police, the firefighters, school teachers? What sense of priority do you have that you see so clearly the need for corporations, but you don't see the need to continue basic services? And what makes this so offensive to me, you turn on the TV, you see all these ads praising the healthcare workers and the nurses and the doctors who saved so many lives, who worked so hard, and the first responders who went out there, they're the heroes of today, and they are, and they are, and they should be acknowledged - and they should be funded.

If you don't fund New York state government, you know what that means? That means I have to cut aid to Northwell, to hospitals, to nurses, to doctors. It means I have to cut aid to local governments that fund police and firefighters. I have to fund funding to schools, teachers, who have also been heroes doing remote learning, et cetera. It's about priorities. It's about values. And I understand the large corporations are the ones who fund the political accounts of these elected officials. But let them remember, that they get elected by the people. People still vote. People still matter. Show the same consideration

for the workers that you showed for the corporations. That's all I'm asking, and that's the Americans First law, and state and local government.

This is not a partisan issue. This is not Democrats versus Republicans. I have stayed 100 miles away from any politics all through this. This is no time for politics. This is not a political divisive issue. This is all the governors in the United States. National Governors Association represents all the governors. The White House left it to the governors to do the reopening, right? All the states are doing the reopening. You can't tell the states go reopen, figure it out, and then not provide them with the funding to do it. The head of the National Governors Association is a Republican governor, Governor Hogan. I'm the vice chairman of the NGA. I'm a Democrat. In unison, in a united voice, we're saying to Washington, you need to pass funding for state and local governments. The House passed a bill that did it. That also provides funding for testing, which is very important, testing, tracing enterprise. It repeals SALT, which is an additional tax on New Yorkers for the federal government. But the Senate now has that bill. The Senate must act.

Also, there was very exciting news about a company that might be close to developing a vaccine and the federal government is working very hard to accelerate the vaccine, as they should. The testing, the regulations, the procedures about getting a vaccine online. That would be the best possible outcome. But, we have to make sure whatever company finds the vaccine, finds the pot of gold, that whatever private company finds that, the vaccine must then be available to all people. And it can't be a situation where only the rich, only the privileged can get the vaccine, because one company owns the rights and they can't produce enough for everyone. This is a public health matter. This is a national security threat. This should not be about one corporation's privacy. If the federal government is bending over backwards and jumping through hoops to allow this company to develop a vaccine, then let's make sure the federal government sets the rules now and says to any company that develops the vaccine, the next day we have to be in a position where that patent, that formula can be given to companies all across the globe to produce a vaccine, so we can treat everyone.

And the last point is this, the world is different today than it was. There are situations in life that can happen on a moment's notice, and change the very trajectory, and definition of your life. You can get health news about an individual that just changes your whole life. What you thought was so important yesterday becomes totally unimportant. This situation, this covid virus has changed the world fundamentally. I don't believe we ever go back to where we were. I don't believe life is about going back, right? Life is about going forward.

But this is a different world. It's a different world individually, it's a different world for families. We're all trying to recalibrate and reassess who we are and how we live and what's important, what's not important. I hope, on an individual level, that this period is going to make me a smarter person, a better person, a deeper person. It's made me question a lot of things about my life, a lot of priorities, a lot of things I was doing. It makes you think through personal relationships and what's important and where you've been spending your time. Was that the smartest use of time? Sometimes when something is taken away you see how valuable it was. Now you can't go see family members if you wanted to. You can't see friends if you wanted to. When someone says you can't, it changes your whole perspective. You ask yourself why haven't I been? Why didn't I? When I get a chance, how am I going to do it differently this time? I think that can actually be a good process to go through. Painful, but good.

It's also true for government. Government is important again, right? Government, most days you lead your life, government, politics, it's a sideshow. It's not that important. When does government really become important? Probably, almost not in my lifetime. When has it been vital? It's vital at the time of war, crisis, real national crisis. But that's the only time it's really vital. When you don't have a choice but to deal with and rely on government.

Well, government is now important again. In a way, it hasn't been in my lifetime. It matters what government does. Government has made the difference between life and death here, right? Because government is part of social action and the people who saved lives in this are New Yorkers for doing the right thing. But government was part of that. It helps organize. Today, government's going to be held to a different standard and it has to be fundamentally different. It has to be

smarter than it was. It matters now what happens. You have to know what you're doing now. Not just look like you know what you're doing, not just sound like you know what you're doing. You have to be smart. You're not going to tweet your way through this. You have to be smart. You have to be competent at what you do. There's something called government and you either know how to do it or you don't know how to do it.

You know, for many years, anyone can be in government. You know. I don't know, can anyone be a nurse? Oh, no, you have to know what you're talking about. Can anyone be a doctor? No, you have to know what you're talking about. Can anyone be a lawyer? No, you have to know what you're talking about. Can anyone be a plumber? Nope, you have to know what you're talking about. Can anyone run government? Oh, yeah, anybody can run government. The less you know, the better. That wasn't true. You have to be competent. It has to be beyond politics.

This is not about an ongoing campaign. You're now a government official, you represent everyone. Forget the politics, represent people. It doesn't matter, Republican, Democrat, that's all garbage now. I'm the governor of New York, all New Yorkers. I don't care if you're Democrat, Republican, atheist. I don't care if you vote, I don't care if you don't vote. That's your business. I represent you. You pay me to represent you. That's how I see it. Government has to be fair. It has to be effective. That's where we all are now. That's where we've been in New York. That's what it means to be New York tough - as person, as a society, as a collective, and as a government. To be smart, to be united, to be disciplined, to be loving, that's New York.

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