

United States: Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing

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FULL TEXT

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

5:47 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. This is a holy week, when religious believers across the nation will observe Passover, Good Friday, and Easter. Millions of Jewish families begin Passover at sundown tonight, a sacred, unbroken tradition that traces back to the ancient land of Egypt. And on Sunday, we celebrate our beautiful, wonderful Easter, which we all look forward to. And we're going to have many Easters together in churches in the future.

We're getting closer. You see the numbers. We're getting much closer to getting our country back to the way it was. We have now an extra two countries that have been attacked: 184. They're being attacked as we speak, but we'll all win. At some point, we're going to all win. We're going to do it sooner than people think.

Earlier today, I spoke with 10,000 of America's faith leaders to thank them for raising the spirits of our people during these very difficult days. While we may be physically apart, we can use this time to pray, to reflect, and to focus on our personal relationship with God.

I also spoke with more than 3,000 mayors, county commissioners, and state and tribal leaders to provide an update on our administration's ongoing drive to beat the virus, to crush the virus. And that's happening. And it's happening, I think if you look, a little bit more quickly than people thought. Maybe a lot more quickly, I hope. And it's something that all over the world we're watching, but people are watching us and seeing what we're doing, and they're very impressed.

We're dealing with many countries right now. Many, many countries. And we're giving them whatever information we're able to glean.

I just spoke with the representatives of the UK, and I think that their great prime minister is doing much better today, or at least better. But certainly he's had a tough bout, and he's still going through a tough time, but he seems to be doing better. And that's good.

And we - we send our regards to Boris and his family and his friends, all of the people that really love him. He's - he's become a very popular - before this happened, became a very popular prime minister. He's doing an excellent job. He loves their country; he loves our country. So we appreciate everything he's done, and hopefully he's going to be okay.

Speaking of great people, and people that have done a fantastic job, I have Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with us. And I'd like to ask Mike to say a few words. And then I think what we'll do, in order to get him back to the State Department, we'll take some questions and we'll then go on with the rest of what I'm going to say. And then we'll take some questions after that, and then Vice President Pence will take over.

So, Mike Pompeo, please.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Mr. President. Under the President's leadership, my team and I at the State Department are doing our part to protect the American people from the virus and, importantly, to get them home.

As you know, when many countries shut down their rail lines, their buses, their infrastructure systems, the capacity to get out of those countries - they were trapped, they're stranded - the State Department swung into action. Since January 29th, we have now repatriated over 50,000 United States citizens back to their homes from more than 90 countries, more than 490 flights back to the United States from all across the world. This worldwide scale of our repatriation efforts is without parallel in our lifetime. We are coordinating with foreign governments, militaries, airport authorities, medical units, transportation companies, hotels, you name it. We're working with them to make sure the American people get back to be with their families.

You can see, behind me, the map of the flights, that we have brought back people -

THE PRESIDENT: Good.

SECRETARY POMPEO: - from all across the world. Every day, I get a chance to hear some of the remarkable stories from our team. Let me give you just a couple of examples.

Our mission in Peru: Working with the Peruvian military and police forces to send riverboats up the - up the river to get citizens that were stranded deep inside the Amazon forest.

Our mission in Nepal: Make sure that a woman who was running low on medication could get what she needed at a pharmacy before boarding an evacuation flight that brought her back here.

In Honduras: After the government imposed a very strict 24/7 curfew and closed airports, our embassy sprang into action for stranded Americans - thousands of them.

A three-year-old boy told one of our consular officers just before he boarded the flight, Thank you for helping me get back home to my dad. Pretty neat.

We've received similar messages from lots of people. They're proud to know that their country will not leave them stranded and we're going to get them back home.

One woman wrote, quote, I was in tears when I received the e-mail approving our flight back to the United States. God bless the United States of America. And another said, I felt like I had allies there that actually treated me like a person or a family member, not just a number.

The Repatriation Task Force at State Department, our consular officers have done great work. I want to thank our partners in the Department of Defense who have helped with some of these flights back home and other government agencies - our sisters and brothers across the United States government in this administration that have helped get these people back.

And then, lastly, aside from our repatriation efforts, we continue to help countries around the world as well. We've got CDC officials helping these countries with expertise and all the things that these countries need to get their citizens safe and healthy and back so that we can get the economy all across the world - the global economy - back on its feet when this crisis is over.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Very good. Thanks, Mike. Maybe you stick for a little while -

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure.

THE PRESIDENT: - and we'll see if anybody has any questions for Secretary of State.

Anybody? Please.

Q Sure. Mr. Secretary, that's an amazing effort that you have made. How do you know when you're done? Because I imagine there are Americans on all corners of the world, and you're always - someone is going pop up and say, I want to go home now.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's a great -

Q When will you give the all - call that it's over?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. So, it's a great question. We still have several thousand people that we're working. They identify themselves every day. New people find themselves in a difficult place. Look, we're going to be done when people can travel on the road again. These people traveled abroad on vacations or with their church and were intending to get back on their own. We hope that day comes pretty soon, where they don't have to rely on the State Department to get them back home.

But know this: In the meantime, we're devoting all the resources we have to get them - they're in - often in difficult places. They're not in the capital, near the airport, or the roads are closed. And so it's not just a matter of getting a flight down there. There's a lot of work that has to be done to coordinate, to make it all happen and get those people available so they're sitting there when the flight lands, they can get on the plane, and then we can get them back home.

We still have several thousand. We're working on it. We chip away at that number every day. But new citizens go to the State Department website, identify themselves, and say, I need a little bit of help, in some way, and we do our best to get that to them just as quickly as we can.

Q So you'll keep it up indefinitely?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're going to keep it up as long as we have resources to do it and there is a need.

Yes, sir.

Q Mr. Secretary, how many of these staffers have tested positive for coronavirus? Have they been tested? Are they going into quarantine? And what does this do to diplomatic efforts overseas if you're pulling 50,000 people out of state capitals - or national capitals, nation capitals all over the world?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the vast majority of these 50,000 weren't our officers. These were ordinary citizens who were there, traveling for business or for commercial or for their trip of a lifetime. We've seen some of them in the cruise ships, but of course they're stranded all over the world.

So our embassies - save for the one that is in Wuhan, which we did pull everybody out of - the rest of our facilities around the world are all open. We've had a handful of our folks now test positive, but we feel like we have a good handle on it and we're doing everything we can to make sure that not just the State Department officials, but our Department of Defense colleagues that are working on these missions as well are doing so in a way that reduces risk to them and their wellbeing also.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Thank you so much. Do you feel like China held - withheld critical information from the United States? And will there be any consequences for that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: You know, this is not the time for retribution, but it is still the time for clarity and transparency. We're still working on this problem set. There's still data that these good people need so that they can perform their analysis of how to both develop therapeutics and a vaccine and to understand where this virus is.

So, every country, China included - every country needs to be transparent about what's gone on in their country. They need to share that data - we share ours with the world - so that the best scientists in the world can get to the right conclusions and bring this economy, this global economy back to the place that we all want it to be as quickly as we can.

Every country has that responsibility. It started in China, and so they had that special responsibility to get it right quickly and fast. Ask every country. As we move forward in the days and weeks ahead, make sure we share that. Do it - do it right. Do it well. And when we do, we'll get this thing back on.

Q But early on, should they have shared their data sooner with the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Every country has an obligation to share that information accurately, timely, completely, transparently, and thoroughly, just as quickly as they can gather it. We'll leave for another time to evaluate how everyone did in that.

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead. In the middle, and then him behind.

Q Thank you. Thank you, President Trump and Secretary. I have a question. The World Health Organization has a fundraising drive for about \$700 million for coronavirus resources. China has only donated \$20 million. The United States actually has donated less. So do you feel that China should be giving more to this World Health Organization effort?

THE PRESIDENT: You can say we helped.

Q And can you comment on the U.S. donation?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Do you want to say something, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you can just say we helped.

SECRETARY POMPEO: We - at this point, we're reevaluating our funding with respect to the World Health Organization. You know, this is very consistent with what President Trump said since the beginning of his campaign: Organizations have to work. They have to deliver the outcomes for which they were intended. And we need to make sure that not only the World Health Organization, but every international organization that we take taxpayer money and give it to them for the benefit of America - we need to make sure it's delivering on those taxpayer dollars.

The World Health Organization is no different in that respect. They have to execute on the mission that they are designed to achieve. And we've seen, with respect to the World Health Organization, here we are. We haven't - it hasn't accomplished what it was intended to deliver.

Q Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Secretary. You said a handful of staffers have tested positive. Are they going to get the hydroxychloroquine treatment? Is that going to be made available to personnel overseas?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't know the answer to that. But - but know that we'll deliver the best medical care every place we can. Some of them are in difficult places where there's not a lot of medical help, and we've done our best to move that medical assistance forward to them in the field.

THE PRESIDENT: Jeff.

Q Thank you, sir. Mr. Secretary - right here - can you give us an update on numbers you're seeing about coronavirus cases in Iran, and whether or not you have any updates on the United States helping them with that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So with respect to our assistance to Iran, we've offered - from the first day we knew that the virus had struck the people of Iran, we offered humanitarian assistance. I regret that they - they chose not to take that.

I've heard - I've heard people talking about sanctions. There are no - the world should know there are no sanctions that prevent humanitarian assistance, medical supplies, pharmaceuticals from going to Iran. We offered American assistance. We've tried to help other countries get assistance in there as well. We've some ability to do that.

I don't have any better data than what you've seen publicly that I could share with you with respect to the extent of the virus inside of Iran.

Q Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Are you allowing exports of medical supplies at this time? Or what's the status of that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So you've seen we're making sure that we have what we need for the American people, whether that's gloves - I'll let the Vice President talk to numbers on that. But at this point, what we are doing in terms of assistance is providing what most of these countries need to learn how to do surveillance themselves, to learn how to conduct tests themselves, to learn the things that can reduce the peak in their countries. Those are the kinds of things.

And we've been doing this. You should know the United States has been incredibly generous. We have CDC officials, like no other country in the world, out helping these nations build out their healthcare - global epidemic healthcare infrastructure. It's good people like - that you see sitting to my right. They've been working on this all their life, all around the world, putting these countries in a place where they're better prepared for a virus like this one.

Q Have any U.S. diplomats or U.S. officials contracted the virus as they have tried to rescue U.S. citizens abroad?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Not that I'm aware of. Not that I'm aware. But it's - there's no doubt - I remember when we sent our team to get our officials and about 800 American citizens - non-government citizens - that were living in Wuhan. I remember when we sent one of our first repatriation flights in there. We were very careful. We sent trained professionals in, but they were going into a very, very difficult, very fraught place. We were blessed they all got back with no one having contracted the virus on that trip.

I'm not aware of any of our officials that have had the virus attack them while they were performing their functions, trying to get people back. We have a number of State Department officials who have - who have COVID-19 now and are working their way through. In fact, we've had three fatalities of local employees - not U.S. direct hires, but local

people who were working for the State Department and embassies around the world. We've had three fatalities, so far.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay? Go ahead, please.

Q So, there have been some calls on the World Health Organization for a leadership change there. I was wondering what your thoughts are on that. Senator Martha McSally, for example, has called for Dr. Tedros to resign.

THE PRESIDENT: Haven't made a determination.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't want to - look, this is not the time to be to be doing that kind of change. There'll be a lot of time to look back and see how the World Health Organization performed.

In the meantime, what our task is, is to preserve and protect the American taxpayers, to make sure that our resources don't go to places that aren't going to deliver on behalf of the American people in the world. And President Trump and I are determined to do that.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay?

Q Just a quick follow-up?

THE PRESIDENT: Let's save it. Can we save it?

Q Just a quick follow-up, sir, if I may, on China.

THE PRESIDENT: (Inaudible) busy man. He's a busy man.

Q You said that China has a responsibility to get correct figures. How would you broadly characterize cooperation with China right now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: There's lots of places we've been cooperating, right? They're providing us assistance where we need it. There are places on the ground now where we do have access to the data we need, and we're deeply appreciative of that.

They've said they want to cooperate. We're completely prepared to cooperate with them. That cooperation means sharing data, being transparent, being upfront, allowing information to flow freely. That's our expectation, not - not just of China, though - of every country that is in this place today.

We - collectively, we have to work our way through this, and to do that, you have to have really good data.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay? Thank you, Mike.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Great. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

THE PRESIDENT: Appreciate it. Thanks. Okay, thank you very much.

In just a few days, we've delivered nearly 11 million N95 masks to hotspots around the country, as you know, including 6.6 million to New York and New Jersey, 1.8 million to Chicago, 1.7 million to Detroit, and 837,000 to New Orleans.

I spoke with the governor of Louisiana a little while ago, and they're doing, really, pretty well. Much better than they thought. They'll be using fewer beds. As you know, we built a hospital. We're about set to complete another hospital, and there's even a possibility they won't - they won't need it. That's what we discussed.

To date, we've shipped out more than 8,000 ventilators, and we have 10,000 - almost 10,000 sitting. They are ready to go, should we need them. And an additional 2,200 newly manufactured ventilators come online on Monday.

We're going to be sending them to various locations, just in case they need them.

My administration is working with Philips to double their production of ventilators by May, and ultimately quadruple production by later this year. High-quality ventilators. We're eliminating bureaucratic barriers to pave the way for Philips's major investments in American manufacturing sites and sales.

This will help to ensure that our country can permanently produce enough ventilators in the future that we can do them by ourselves. We're going to have a big stockpile when we're finished. And we expect to be sending quite a few to other countries to help them after we're finished. And even now, we're - a couple of countries are really, really in dire need. And it looks like our projections were right on ventilators, and some states that were thinking they would need thousands of more than they thought will - are now already taken care of, which we're very happy about.

In addition, beginning in May, we'll be receiving almost 300 million new face masks. We're going to have masks of

about 300 million; they'll be starting to be delivered in May and during the month of June. So we're ordering a big stockpile, and we're thinking about doing an extra 200 million should we need them, or for the - or for the stockpile. So we'll be in a position to have something incredible. It'll be a total of 500 million masks.

And today, 750,000 new protective gowns landed in Dallas, Texas, as a result of a partnership led by the federal government, DuPont, and FedEx. And that's been a great partnership. That's worked very well. So we have 600 and - and we have 750,000 new protective gowns. And these are at a high level - very high quality.

As American industry steps up to help, so are America's doctors and scientists. Ten drugs are now in clinical trials. And my administration is taking unprecedented actions to make new therapies and treatments available without delay. The doctors, the lab technicians, the companies - I spoke to them yesterday; I spoke again today. They are coming up with things that are, I think, I hope - in the very near future - are going to be very, very special, very important.

Our National Stockpile is now equipped with nearly 30 million hydroxychloroquine pills. So we're up to about 30 million. We're distributing by the millions.

You read about State Representative Karen Whitsett, who I very much appreciate her going public. But she was, I think, very, very much helped by this pill. She saw what I was saying on television. She thought she was in very bad shape. I don't want to go further than that, but you see her story; you know her story. She's a highly respected state rep from Michigan. And she did a - she did a - I think she did a great service, what she - what she's done. She's in terrific shape. She looks fantastic. And she was very generous with her statements.

In addition, the azithromycin and zinc - they say zinc - you should add zinc. Now, it's all - has to be recommended by doctors, physicians. But they say zinc. I want to throw that out there because that's where they seem to be having the best result. So you add the zinc and the azithromycin.

And it's been - we've had a lot of good stories. A lot of good stories. And we have almost 30 million doses. So we've got a lot. I want to thank Prime Minister Modi of India for allowing us to have what we requested from before the problem arose. And he was - he was terrific. We'll remember it.

Later today, the CDC will release further guidance to help ensure critical infrastructure workers can perform their job safely after potential exposure to the virus. And so they're working on that.

The question was asked a little while ago about the World Health Organization. And, as you know, they made a statement on June - on January 14th, I guess it was, that there was no human-to-human transmission. Well, there was. They probably made that statement in the second or third week of December, in addition, but they made it very powerfully on January 14th. And they criticized me very strongly when I said that we're going to shut down flights coming in from China, and especially from certain parts of China, but from China generally. We were criticized very badly.

So, last year, and for many years, hundreds of millions of dollars has been paid to the World Health Organization. Hundreds of millions of dollars a year. And last year, it was \$452 million, and China paid \$42 million. Before that, it was \$500 million, and China paid less than \$40 million. And before that, it was similar numbers - in the 400s, 300s, and sometimes even in the 500s of millions of dollars. And China would do proportionately just a small fraction of that number.

And I think they have to get their priorities right, and their priorities are that everybody has to be treated properly - every country. And it doesn't seem that way, does it? It doesn't seem that way.

So we're going to do - study, investigation, and we're going to make a determination as to what we're doing. In the meantime, we're holding back. We're going to - we want to see. It's very unfair.

So the United States - \$452 million compared to \$42 million. That's to the World Health Organization. That's not good. That's not good. Not fair. Not fair at all. And other countries, as you know, also gave very substantially less than the United States.

And the World - WHO - World Health got it wrong. I mean, they got it very wrong. In many ways, they were wrong. They also minimized the threat very strongly and - not good.

I want to take this opportunity to express the thanks of an extremely grateful nation to the Americans who go to

work every day, especially in these critical industries, in the midst of the pandemic to care for and protect and feed American people, including medical personnel, law enforcement, first responders, food suppliers, sanitation workers.

And somebody mentioned today, Would you please specifically call out cashiers and clerks at grocery stores who are in danger during the - during the pandemic, during the epidemic? They're in danger. They're really in great danger. And they've been incredible and I want to call them out - to cashiers and clerks. We grew up with cashiers and clerks and grocery stores and they've been great and they've really been true American heroes, so I want to call them out because they're working hard and they're working in conditions that aren't ideal. But soon they'll be ideal again.

As we mourn the terrible loss of life for this - and from this - this grave pandemic, we're seeing signs that our aggressive strategy to slow the spread is working. The number of new cases is stabilizing. The number of beds necessary in so many locations - I was watching, this morning, New York. I was watching Louisiana. You see what's going on. The numbers are changing and they're changing rapidly. And soon we'll be over that curve. We'll be over the top and we'll be headed in the right direction. I feel strongly about that.

Some terrible days ahead, but we're going to have some - some wonderful days ahead. And we're going to get this behind us, this terrible thing behind us. Some people will never be able to forget if they had a loved one or if they had a great friend or a friend - but we're going to get it behind us.

This is a tribute to the discipline and the devotion of the American people, what we've accomplished. If every American continues to strictly adhere to social distancing guidelines, we can defeat the invisible enemy and save countless lives and we can do it much more quickly.

We're hopefully heading toward a final stretch - the light at the end of the tunnel, as I was saying. As we continue to wage all-out medical war to defeat the virus, we're also fighting an economic war to ensure we can quickly turn to full financial strength. We have to get our country back. We have to get going. Everybody wants to get going. Yesterday, I asked Congress to provide an additional \$250 billion to expand the incredibly successful Paycheck Protection Program - you've seen what's gone on there; it's incredible, actually - which is allowing our small businesses to keep employees on the payroll and get ready for the opening. Like a second opening.

To protect millions of American jobs, I'm asking Congress to pass additional funding for this program this week, as soon as possible. And I think we have a pretty good understanding with the Democrats. Hopefully, it's going to be bipartisan. We do not have time for the partisan games and we don't want that - the obstruction or totally unrelated agendas. We want to do this for the small businesses and the workers. And we can do a phase four and phase four will be later.

This will be an expansion of what we've already done because it's so successful. The \$350 billion will be expanded by hopefully 250 and, if you look at the kind of loans, thousands - tens of thousands of loans to small businesses. It's a - it's a great thing to see. It's turned out to be more successful and more productive than anybody would have thought. But Democrats or Republicans are coming together to get that job done. That's a very important job. In recent days and days ahead, we'll restore America's health and economic might, but also dimensions of our national strength will be brought together, I think, stronger than - I think we have a chance to be stronger than ever before. We've learned a lot and we have tremendous stimulus now. Tremendous stimulus. And we're going for more. Hopefully, we'll be doing an infrastructure bill so we can rebuild our roads and highways and bridges and tunnels and all of the things that we should be doing for our country. We're going to rebuild our country, not other countries where they don't even appreciate it.

As our citizens persevere through this present challenge, we're renewing American unity and we're replenishing American will and we are witnessing new American valor each and every day. We see it every day. The daring and determination of our people in this crisis reminds us that no matter how hard it gets, no matter what obstacles we must overcome, Americans will keep on fighting to victory and we will secure the glorious future that our citizens so richly deserve, especially after going through this nightmare, this evil beast.

So we're getting very close and hopefully it will - hopefully, it's on the other side and it will end soon. And I think it

will. And I just think that the people of this country are fantastic.

So we'll take a few questions and then Vice President will take over.

Please go ahead. Please.

Q Thank you so much, Mr. President. ABC is reporting that your intelligig- intelligence community was warning about the virus as early as November and produced a detailed report about the outbreak in China. When did you first learn about the intelligence? And could you have acted on it then?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I learned when I started - when I learned about the gravity of it was sometime just prior to closing the country to China. And when we closed up the flights coming in from China and various other elements - and then, as you know, we closed up to Europe.

So, I don't know exactly, but I'd like to see the information.

Yeah, please. Please.

Q Mr. President, a lot of Americans want to see businesses reopen, to get back to work.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. So do I, more than anybody.

Q So what specifically has to happen for you to feel that it is safe to reopen the country? And what is your plan to do that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we can say that we have to be on that down side of that slope and heading to a very strong direction that this thing is gone. We could do it in phases. We can go to some areas, which you know. Some areas are much less affected than others.

But it would be nice to be able to open with a big bang and open up our country - or certainly most of our country.

And I think we're going to do that soon. If you look at what's happening, I would say we're ahead of schedule.

Now, you hate to say it too loudly because, all of the sudden, things don't happen. But I think we will be sooner rather than later. But we'll be sitting down with the professionals. We'll be sitting down with many different people and making a determination. And those meetings will start taking place fairly soon.

Q So you wouldn't do that until the health experts tell you it's safe to do it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I would - I rely very heavily on them. Yeah.

Q Do you think - is there a system for monitoring and testing that you're looking at that will lead that to be safe?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. We're putting in - yeah. We're putting in very heavy testing systems. We have the best testing systems.

And again, don't forget when we look at cases, I'm looking at some - I'm not going to insult anybody, I'm not going to insult any country - but I'm looking at countries that are showing less cases than us; that's testing. We're testing more than anybody. And you - you saw exponentially, more than anybody, by far. And our testing has become - I think it'll end up being a big strength. In fact, the other countries - other countries that the media talked about are now calling us for what are we doing and how are we doing it so quickly and where are we getting these tests because our tests are really good now. They've been proven to be very accurate.

Yes, please.

Q Thank you, President Trump. Two quick questions.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Sure.

Q One on infrastructure. Members of your administration and members of Congress have pointed out that the top paid federal employee, it's not the President, it's the head of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and he made \$8 million last year and some -

THE PRESIDENT: It's ridiculous. I agree. It's ridiculous. I think it's the highest-paid government - long before I got here - you said Tennessee Valley Authority, right? Has to be the highest-paid man in any government; makes approximately \$8 or \$9 million. I don't know the gentleman but he's got a heck of a job. He gets paid a lot of money. He's been there for a long while, hasn't he?

Q This one actually is new. He came in April. But the previous one was -

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that's a separate - yeah, that's separate. But I'm talking about the - the - we just have some new people going on the board, I know.

But as you know, that's a quasi-public agency. And whoever the head of the agency is, that person makes a lot of money -

Q And if I could ask my second question -

THE PRESIDENT: - which is an amazing thing, right? And when we want them to do something, they're not there for us. That's not good. That's not good. They've been there for a long time. That's been a story for a long time.

Q And I assume that you would support reducing that salary as part of the infrastructure bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Reducing it by a lot.

Q Thank you. And my other question is -

THE PRESIDENT: That would be the greatest job in the history of government, almost. Certainly if you're into money. Tennessee Valley Authority. That's right.

Go ahead.

Q So -

THE PRESIDENT: I've been waiting for somebody to ask me about that. It's been - it's been bothering me for a long time too.

Go ahead.

Q So one of the biggest rating hits of the coronavirus, aside from these briefings, has been a show on Netflix called Tiger King.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

Q And the man who's the star of this is a former zoo owner who's serving a 22-year prison sentence. He's asking you for a pardon, saying he was unfairly convicted. Your son yesterday jokingly said that, you know, he was going to advocate for it. And I was wondering if you've seen the show and if you have any thoughts on pardoning Joe Exotic.

THE PRESIDENT: Which son? It must be Don.

Q It was.

THE PRESIDENT: I had a feeling it was Don. Is that what he said? I don't know. I know nothing about it. He has 22 years for what? What did he do?

Q He allegedly hired someone to murder an animal rights activist. But he said that he didn't do that. And he was -

THE PRESIDENT: You think he didn't do it? Are you on his side?

Q Well, I'm a reporter. I shouldn't take sides. But -

THE PRESIDENT: Are you recommending a pardon?

Q No. I'm not advocating anything yet.

THE PRESIDENT: As a reporter, you're not allowed to do that. You'd be criticized by these - would you recommend a pardon?

Q I'm not weighing in on Tiger King, Mr. President. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think you would. I don't think you would.

Go ahead. Do you have a question?

Q I do like Joe Exotic, I will say.

THE PRESIDENT: I'll take a look. Is that Joe Exotic?

Q Yeah.

THE PRESIDENT: That's Joe Exotic? (Laughs.)

Q Let me get back to -

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead.

Q - the coronavirus if I can, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

Q Last week, your top experts were saying that we should expect 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in this country. You've been talking about how it looks like maybe things are plateauing. Are these numbers now being revised downward? I know you don't want people to stop social distancing and that sort of thing, but what can you tell us

about the numbers? Are they being revised down?

THE PRESIDENT: My - yeah. My impression, Jim, is those were the numbers that were set, and they were set as an expectation from quite a while ago. I think we're just doing much better than those numbers.

If either of you would like to talk about that, it's a fair question.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Deborah?

THE PRESIDENT: Do you want to come up? Deborah?

Q I know Dr. Redfield said something about it too.

DR. BIRX: Yeah, so, I think all of you - many of you have done the analysis of the same models that we utilized. And if you do the models of the models, you end up with that range. At the same time, we've carefully looked at Italy and Spain. And we are doing much better, in many cases, than several other countries. And we're trying to understand that.

We believe that our healthcare delivery system in the United States is quite extraordinary. I know many of you are watching the Act Now model and the IHME model from - and they have consistently decreased the number, the mortality from over almost 90,000 or 86,000, down to 81,000 and now down to 61,000. That is modeled on what America is doing. That's what's happening.

And I think what has been so remarkable, I think to those of us who have been in the science fields for so long, is how important behavioral change is and how amazing Americans are in adapting to and following through on these behavioral changes. And that's what's changing the rate of new cases, and that's what will change the mortality going forward, because now we're into the time period of full mitigation that should be reflected within the coming weeks of decreasing mortality. I mean, that's what we really hope to see.

We are impressed by the American people. And I think models are models. I've always worked on validating. I've spent my life validating models all over the world, and that's why we do surveys and surveillance and we make sure that what we think is right is right.

I think this will change how people look at respiratory diseases because it will change what is possible when the globe, and particularly the American people, do this level of mitigation. I think, as I talked about yesterday, we are still - we are still in awe, really, of the American people's strength in this and following through.

Q And if I could just ask, Mr. President -

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. I'm going to do that. I'm going to ask Bob to come up just for a second. Director -

I think that's it: We have a - we've done, they have done, everybody has done - everybody, a great job. So those were original projections. And we don't want to say anything about beating it yet, but I think we will have a very good chance to beat them very substantially.

Bob, please?

DR. REDFIELD: Thank you, Mr. President. And I just want to add to what Ambassador Birx said. I mean, this is a consequence of the commitment of the American people. You know, a lot of us have always had challenges of changing behavior, whether it's exercising regularly or different habits with smoking, when it - when it affects us. What's been remarkable to watch here is how the American public has changed their behavior when it protects the vulnerable.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That's right.

DR. REDFIELD: I think that's really what I'm so proud to see.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That's well said.

Q And, Mr. President, just a follow-up on something from yesterday, and a quick just yes or no question. Yesterday, you said you had not seen Peter Navarro's memo on the coronavirus back in January and February 23rd.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

Q Were you ever briefed on those memos? Did you ever discuss those memos with anybody on your -

THE PRESIDENT: I don't remember that. I've now seen the memo. I saw it. It was - Peter sends a lot of memos. I didn't see the memo. As you know, World Health was saying that was not correct because, at the time, they called it wrong.

But I didn't see the memo. But I acted as quickly as - people were shocked that I acted so quickly. And everybody thought I was wrong because I did act so quickly as you know, with respect to closing the borders - with respect not only to China, but with Europe I closed the borders. And I think that was very important.

But, no, I didn't see the memo at the time. But I have seen it since.

Yeah, please.

Q One other quick question -

THE PRESIDENT: Wait a minute, Jim. Let me - let me do a couple of others. We'll go back.

Q The head of the World Health Organization today warned against politicizing -

THE PRESIDENT: I agree with that.

Q And he said that the consequence of this politicization could actually create more body bags. It's a pretty vivid image. What - what do you believe the consequences of the U.S. pulling out its funding of the WHO would actually be (inaudible) like this?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think when you say more body bags, I think we would have done - and he would have been much better serving the people that he's supposed to serve if they gave a correct analysis. I mean, everything was, I said, China-centric: Everything was going to be fine. No human to human. Keep the borders open. He wanted me to keep the borders open. I closed the borders despite him, and that was a hard decision to make at the time.

We were all together, and we made a decision against the World Health Organization. So when he says politicizing, he's politicizing. That shouldn't be.

But, look, we spent \$450 billion, \$452 billion. Almost \$500 billion last year. Hundreds of billions in previous years. And they got to do better than that. They got to do better. When you talk about politics, I can't believe - he's talking about politics when look at the relationship they have to China.

So China spends \$42 million, we spend \$450 million, and everything seems to be China's way. That's not right. It's not fair to us, and honestly, it's not fair to the world.

Okay. Question in the back. Yeah.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. There's breaking news today in a couple of reports from a couple different outlets that Jared Kushner's team is seeking to create a national coronavirus database, a tracking system for patients who've been diagnosed. Now, his spokesperson said that that's not true.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. It's not -

Q It's not true?

THE PRESIDENT: I have never heard about it. Doesn't sound like a bad idea, actually. But I have not heard about that.

Q So you would be okay with it if were?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know if I'd be okay. I have to see it. But it sounds very scientific, and it sounds like it could be good, based on tracking. But it also has to do with rights and lots of different constitutional questions. I have not heard that at all.

Q Okay. So some people are concerned it would be like the post-9/11 PATRIOT Act, that it ultimately led to FISA abuse. Are there any - are you concerned about that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah - the FISA abuse, of which I was the one abused. And a couple of other people, in all fairness.

No, I don't know anything about it. I haven't heard it. I mean, I'll speak to him. I don't - I don't think so. They would have told me. I would have known about it.

Please.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. The Nevada delegation is unhappy because smaller casinos and businesses that make a profit -

THE PRESIDENT: In Nevada?

Q - from gaming - in Nevada - found out they're not eligible for the CARES Act PPP money. Is this - and I talked to one member who said gaming -

THE PRESIDENT: You mean because of the number of employees?

Q Because of the number of employees -

THE PRESIDENT: And yet they're small businesses.

Q And they thought gaming would be - would not be treated any differently than any other business with this. Was this an oversight?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I can look at that. I could look. It's a great state, and I will take a look at that strongly. Are you talking only the smaller casinos?

Q That's -

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. I'll take a look at that. Fine. I don't mind that.

Q Is the first you've heard about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Please. Yeah. We'll take a look. Yeah. We haven't heard. Nobody has told me about it, but I'll look at it.

They - they - it's a great state. They do a great job. So I'm going to look at it very strongly. I understand what they mean.

Please.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Turning to the economy, what if you urge Americans to go back to work and they don't listen to you? Would you leave that up to the governors, to businesses, to citizens to decide when it's safe to stop social distancing?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, when you say they don't listen, I think they're going to listen. They want to go back. Everybody wants. They're going stir crazy. They have been in those houses and those apartments and their buildings. I mean, they've really been - they have done a great job.

Again, when you look - the question was just asked about - you know, about how we're doing compared to projections. Those were just original projections, the big projection being 2.2 million people would die if we did nothing. That was another decision we made: Close it up. That was a big decision that we made. Two very smart people walked into my office, and they said, Listen, these are your alternatives. And that was a projection of, I guess, 1.5- to 2.2 million people would die if we didn't close it up. That's a lot of people. So, if we do a number that's tremendously smaller than that - now, if we did close it up, the numbers got to 100- to 220 million people.

So, if we can stay substantially under the 100, which was the original projection, I think we all did a very good job, even though it's a lot of people.

Q Do you think that'll happen by May 1st?

THE PRESIDENT: Say it?

Q Do you think we will be on track for that by May 1st?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, right now, we're - I mean, we're doing well in terms of the numbers. I can't tell you in terms of the date. You know, we don't want to - we don't want to go down, and then we can start going up, if we're not careful. So, we have to be careful.

As far as distancing - social distancing and other things - certainly for a while. You know, at some point, that's going away. We'll be able to sit next to each other and every - like we have all our lives. This is a very unique thing. This has not happened, anything like this, of this magnitude, since 1917, 1918, the great pandemic. That was - that was something.

But - yeah, no, people want to sit next to each other at restaurants. They want to sit next to each other like normal at a football game, baseball game, basketball game, hockey game. No, we want to go back to life.

Now, the first period of time, maybe we'll go a little bit slower and maybe we'll be talking about distancing. But at some point, we expect to be back like it was before. And hopefully it'll never happen. Hopefully it will - if it does happen it's going to be in a hundred years from now. The last one, 1917 - that's something. That's a long time ago. And that was - that was a horrible thing.

Jim, go ahead.

Q Yeah, I wanted to get back to something you were saying yesterday about people going to Wisconsin and voting

-

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

Q - in the middle of this pandemic, really putting their lives on a line. And you said: Well, if they do that, vote by mail, perhaps we'll have voter fraud in this country.

And I just wanted to ask you, voters in five states - Utah, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington, and Oregon - all vote by mail. Can you or the White House staff or your campaign provide any evidence to back up your claim that mail-in voting is rife with fraud, like the example you gave of people working in rooms, filling out false ballots?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, sure. Well, what happened -

Q You've been talking about voter fraud -

THE PRESIDENT: Well, what happened - yeah. True.

Q - since the beginning of this administration.

THE PRESIDENT: True and fair.

Q And where is the evidence of it?

THE PRESIDENT: The - I think there's a lot of evidence, but we'll provide you with some, okay? And there's evidence that's being compiled just like it's being compiled in the state of California, where they settled with Judicial Watch, saying that a million people should not have been voting in - you saw that.

Q But all the experts say voter fraud is rare.

THE PRESIDENT: Wait, excuse me. I'm just telling you. I'm telling you, in California, in the great state of California, they settled, and we could've gone a lot further. Judicial Watch settled where they agreed that a million people should not have voted, where they were 115 years old and lots of things, and people were voting in their place. What I see and - you know, every one of those states that you mentioned is a state that happens to be won by the Democrats. And if you have a position like me, where it's registered, you're here, and we're voting someplace where I'm not - I haven't left the White House in, I guess, months, other than to, you know, ask a ship to - you know, wave it goodbye to New York - which, by the way, is now going - as you know, being used for the purpose that we're talking about, which a lot of people wanted.

Q Do you tweeted mail-in voting -

THE PRESIDENT: Wait a minute.

Q - doesn't work out well for the Republicans.

THE PRESIDENT: Well it's - it hasn't.

Q So isn't your -

THE PRESIDENT: It certainly hasn't.

Q Isn't your concern really just political?

THE PRESIDENT: But if you're a senior citizen and if you're somebody that needs it, I'm all for it. But they have to be very careful, because you know the things with bundling and all of the things that are happening with votes by mail where thousands of votes are gathered. And I'm not going to say which party does it, but thousands of votes are gathered and they come in and they're dumped in a location, and then, all of a sudden, you lose elections if you think you're going to win.

Q But where is the proof that that's happened?

THE PRESIDENT: I won't stand for it. Well, we're going to find out about the proof, because you're going to see what's going on. And I'm not going to stand for it. Our voting system - first of all, we should have voter ID. When you vote, you should have voter ID. And if you send something in, you should be sure - as a state and as a country, you should be sure that that vote is meaningful and it's not just made fraudulently, because there's a lot of fraudulent voting going on in this country. This country should have voter ID.

Okay, let's do another one. Go, please.

Q Mr. President, currently, the only - the only way that we can track these millions of doses of hydroxychloroquine that are being distributed across the country -

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

Q - is through the E-Health DataSystem. How systematically is your task force watching this system, understanding it's early?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think it's very systematic. Yeah, we're distributing the hydroxy all through the country. It's being distributed in large amounts. We have it coming in now. We're up to 29 million doses; then we went to 30 million doses. But we have it coming in all throughout the country, and much of it's being distributed. In fact, it'll start going down, what we have in our stockpile.

Q But the only (inaudible).

THE PRESIDENT: And, again, it's had - you know, I - I hope it works. Again, I'm not a doctor, as you possibly have found out. I'm not a doctor, but I'm a person with common sense.

And we've had some very good results over the course -

Q Through the E-Health DataSystem?

THE PRESIDENT: - including a woman who just reported it two days ago.

Yes?

Q Through the E-Health DataSystem, are they - is that operating -

THE PRESIDENT: I think no. We're looking - we're looking to provide it in many different ways. In many ways, we're - in certain instances, we've been asked - in the case of Michigan, we've been asked who the governor of Michigan would like to - I think she's become a big fan of it as a medication, as a - as something that's going to help with this horrible virus. And we're delivering it to the governments of various states when they ask. So certain states are asking, certain governments are asking, and we're delivering it directly to the government.

Yeah, please. Go ahead.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President. We know many people around the world are paying close attention to this press conference.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Yes.

Q So on behalf of -

THE PRESIDENT: Good. Where are you from?

Q - Foreign Media -

THE PRESIDENT: Where are you from?

Q I'm from Taiwan.

THE PRESIDENT: Good.

Q Yes. On behalf of Foreign Media Group, I would like to ask you two questions. First question is that the French President Macron called Iranian President Rouhani and say the euro has started to shift the medical goods to Iran. Would you consider -

THE PRESIDENT: Medical goods?

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: That doesn't bother me.

Q Yeah, so will you -

THE PRESIDENT: No, if they're sending medical goods to Iran, it doesn't bother me. Okay?

Q Yeah, so the other question is that the world is also paying attention to the U.S. election. So we are also - we know that Bernie Sanders has dropped out today.

THE PRESIDENT: I did see that today.

Q Yeah.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, he didn't really drop out. He didn't really - what about his delegates? I mean, he - he said he's going to keep his delegates and - which is sort of interesting. He's going to keep his delegates, and he'd like to get more now.

Now, is he dropping out or not? That's not dropping out. When you keep your delegates and then you want more delegates before you get to the convention, that's a weird deal going on there. I don't know what's happening.

Q So what's -

THE PRESIDENT: And I don't know why President Obama hasn't supported Joe Biden a long time ago. There is something he feels is wrong. Why isn't - he'll come out. I'm sure he's got to come out at some point because he certainly doesn't want to see me for four more years. We're not - we think a little bit differently.

You know what? I'll tell you, it does amaze me that President Obama hasn't supported Sleepy Joe. It just hasn't happened. When is it going to happen? When is it going to happen? Why isn't he? He knows something that you don't know, that I think I know, but you don't know. So it'll be interesting.

But with Bernie, I saw his standard fare today. I watched. And I hope that a lot of Bernie Sanders's people, just like they did last time - we got a tremendous percentage of Bernie people. And I think they voted for me largely because of trade, because Bernie and I agree on trade. We agree that the United States has been ripped off by virtually every country they do business with. The difference is I've done a lot about it, and I'm doing more about it. And we've made incredible trade deals, including USMCA, the deal with China, and then, all of a sudden, that gets disturbed by this virus situation.

But China has to spend almost \$250 billion on purchasing our products, \$40- to \$50 billion with our farmers. And the Bernie Sanders people are big believers on what I'm saying on trade. And I got a lot of them in the last election. That surprised people, but it didn't surprise me.

No, those are great people. They're great people. But I - I just - look, I'm looking at Bernie Sanders. I watched this morning, and I said, What is that all about? Like, you saw that - the delegates. The delegates. He's not giving up his delegates. He's keeping them, and he said he wants to get more of them. And I think he's doing it to negotiate, I assume. But I don't know, that's - that's a hard thing to do.

Yeah, Jeff, go ahead.

Q Mr. President, OPEC is meeting with Russia tomorrow and some other countries to discuss oil prices.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

Q Oil prices are at \$23 a barrel.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, that's good. Finally -

Q What -

THE PRESIDENT: - somebody knows something when they ask a question.

Q What is your message to them ahead of their meeting tomorrow? Will the U.S. consider a coordinated cut of production here?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think. Look, we already cut. You know, we're, like, very market-oriented. If you look at Texas and if you look at North Dakota, and if you look at some of our states that do this very well, they've already cut way back. You know, they cut back automatically.

Q So you don't think it's necessary?

THE PRESIDENT: But in the case of Russia, in the case of Saudi Arabia, they increased production at a time when you didn't need it, and then they got hit by the virus, which knocked out 40 percent of the market. And now they're flooded with oil.

Look I - I just say this: You have two countries that are getting hurt very badly. Russia is getting hurt, and that's their primary source. And Saudi Arabia, that's their - definitely their primary source. And it doesn't make sense that they flooded the market. For whatever reason, they did that for themselves. It's an argument that they had. And I think they'll straighten it out.

A lot of progress has been made over the last week, and it'll be interesting to see what comes out of OPEC tomorrow. But OPEC, obviously - for many years, I used to think OPEC was very unfair. I hated OPEC. You want to know the truth? I hated it, because it was a fix. But somewhere along the line, that broke down and it went the opposite way.

And we have a tremendously powerful energy industry in this country now. Number one in the world. And I don't want those jobs being lost. Okay?

Q What will you do - just to follow up to that, sir. What will you do if they don't end up cutting tomorrow?

THE PRESIDENT: We'll see. I mean, I have a lot of options.

Please.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Got a lot of good options, Jeff. Beauties. I might like it even more.

Q Tariffs presumably being one of them?

THE PRESIDENT: No, you'll. Let's see what happens. Hopefully they can make a deal.

Let's go.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Clearly, Americans are getting very anxious to go back to work.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree.

Q You're sounding optimistic -

THE PRESIDENT: Including me.

Q - yet still very vague. Now that the IMHE [sic] model specifically has been adjusted down to 61,000, when are we going to open back up? Can you give us a better date? Is it going to be April 30th, May 1st?

THE PRESIDENT: You said adjusted back down 61,000. What was adjusted back?

Q The IM - the IMHE [sic] model. The one that originally predicted, like, between 100- and 200,000.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Go ahead. It's still a big number, right? Sixty-one. Right?

Q It's a big number.

THE PRESIDENT: That's a big number. Go ahead.

Q But can you give us a more specific date? Will it be April 30th, May 1st?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't want to do that. Look, I had a date, and I thought it was a very aspirational day. It's turning out to be very interesting, because a lot of good things are happening by Easter. But I had a very aspirational date. I didn't think you could make it. I didn't say we would do it by Easter, but I said, Boy, wouldn't it be great to shoot for Easter? That would be a great day, a beautiful day, a very important day to a lot of people like me and like some of you in the room. Maybe all of you in the room, frankly.

But Easter is a very important day. So I had - aspirationally, I said, Let's see if we can do it at Easter. You know, but I said it would be very tough. And I was criticized for that, so I don't like giving dates. And that wasn't a date, that was just an aspiration. That would have been incredible.

But I don't think we're going to be very far behind. And some of these models are looking like Easter is going to be a very important date anyway because of the curve. I mean, it's hitting the top, and it's starting to come down. And one person said Easter is looking like a good time. So a good time for that, for heading down. So we'll see what happens.

Look, there's no reason to do that. We have a lot of good things happening. When I spoke to the governor of Louisiana, he said, Tony, they need far less beds than they needed. I said, Well, good, because we're building 1,000-room additional. We built them 1,000 - the beds. And now we're building another thousand.

And I said, Listen, is there a way that we don't build - I don't want to build them if they don't need them. In New York, the Javits isn't too heavily used; it's ready to go - 2,900 beds - plus, we now have the ship set for COVID if they want to use it. And we're using it for governor Murphy in New Jersey. So we'll see what happens.

But, you know, the numbers are coming way down. The ventilators, we're all set. We have a lot to go if we want. But we're not getting - I'm not getting calls where they need ventilators anymore. So we were right on those ventilators. I'd love to have additional ventilators for some of the countries that are our allies and our friends. And even if they're not our allies and our friends, you're saving human lives. But I'd love to see if we had some - I mean, we're making a lot of ventilators right now. We have a - and they take a while to make, and they're very expensive and they're very complex to make. But I'd love to be able to help other countries once we're taken care of.

But I just sent 100 ventilators to Colorado, and that was great. A senator there who is a terrific senator - Cory and Cory Gardner. And he called me last night. He said, Could you get 100 ventilators for Colorado? And we just sent them out, and there'll be there very shortly.

So - but it looks like we're in great shape from the bed standpoint. It looks like we're in great shape from the

ventilator standpoint. And you just heard, I ordered 500 million masks - 500 N95s and others - and surgical. But we ordered 500 million masks: 300 and 200. And they're going to be here very shortly.

So, we're really in great shape, and we started off with an empty cupboard.

So I'm going to leave the Vice President and his group to handle it. And I will see you probably tomorrow. Okay?

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Q You don't have any investments in hydro - hydroxychloroquine?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't.

Q Okay.

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't. Thanks. Good question.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You all can come up if you want. It'll be brief.

Well, good evening everyone. And to our fellow Americans out west, good afternoon. We find ourselves in the midst of a very tough week for Americans in areas most impacted by the coronavirus - the New York City area, New Jersey, Louisiana. We continue to focus resources and attention on those areas. And I know that the hearts and prayers of the American people are with - are with all of those communities.

But in the wake of more than 1.9 million tests, we see more than 400,000 Americans have tested positive for the coronavirus, and sadly, we've lost more than 14,000. We - we grieve. But as the Good Book says, we do not grieve like those who have no hope.

In this very special week, I know that the faith of millions of Americans is a comfort to them. The President and I spoke to more than 10,000 faith leaders, and we were able to express to them our gratitude for the way that they're strengthening the communities that they serve.

But we also find hope in the numbers that Dr. Birx will continue to reflect on today. For as Dr. Fauci explained yesterday and in the days before, the losses - as grievous as they are - that we are seeing today are a reflection of people that contracted the coronavirus, in many cases before strong mitigation steps were taken, before the guidelines for American fully took hold.

The cases, however, and the new cases and the hospitalizations are, in fact, a reflection of the results of what the American people are doing. And I want to echo the President's and Dr. Birx's statements today about the extraordinary work the American people are doing. Because we continue to see a great progress, low and steady numbers in the states of California and Washington.

And in the New York metropolitan area, New Jersey, New Orleans metro area, Detroit, in Chicago, and Boston, we continue to see evidence of stabilization that should be an encouragement to every American - an encouragement that we may - may be reaching the point where the impact of the coronavirus is beginning to level off.

And - but it also should be an encouragement to every American to keep doing what we are all doing: Heed the guidance of your state and local authorities, and for every American, continue to put the White House Coronavirus guidelines for America into effect.

An area of particular concern we were briefed on this morning is the city of Philadelphia. I spoke today to Governor Tom Wolf. And as we begin to see early trend lines in Philadelphia, I assured him that we were going to continue to flow resources and support to that community. But our message to the people of the Philadelphia area is: Now, more than ever, practice the social distancing so that Philadelphia and, to some extent, even Pittsburgh do not have to endure what other communities before them have had to endure.

Also today, at the President's direction, we hosted a conference call with every Republican member of the House of Representatives and every Democrat member of the House of Representatives. And we expressed our appreciation to Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Leader Kevin McCarthy for convening these forums.

We've brought together key members of our task force team. The Secretary of the Treasury discussed the progress that we've made on Paycheck Protection. He reported to members of Congress that, so far, we're working with more than 3,600 lenders across the country, and we've dispersed more than \$98 billion in forgivable loans. Now, these are loans that if small businesses accept this money and use it to keep people on their payroll over the next two months, they'll be completely forgiven.

The Treasury tonight will be issuing a new FAQ - frequently asked questions - document that will also make it clear that lenders may use their own closing documents for completing loan applications. And that information is available at Treasury.gov and SBA.gov, as well.

Dr. Birx and Dr. Fauci briefed the members of Congress today on the latest data. They'll both reflect on that in a moment. We also had Admiral Polowczyk talk about our control tower system, and the extraordinary flow of supplies to critical areas across the country. And we also briefed on the disbursement of resources to local hospitals with Seema Verma and gave them an update on what the Secretary of State spoke about today. It is remarkable to think: more than 50,000 Americans brought back home, through nearly 500 flights. And we thanked the members of Congress who have worked with the State Department to identify family members and groups that found themselves stranded overseas, and we were grateful for that.

In addition to our interaction with members of Congress today, we spoke with the president of the Henry Ford Hospital, Bob Riney. It is the Henry Ford Hospital that is conducting a clinical trial for hydrochloroquine. He expressed great enthusiasm for the work that they had done. They had a rather overwhelming response to the initial trial, which is beginning this week, with 3,000 people taking the hydrochloroquine or a placebo so they can march [sic] it - match it.

But what the president of the Henry Ford Hospital told me is they'd like to expand the test. I put him in touch with Steve Hahn in the FDA, and we'll be adding several more clinical trial paths to look at impacts on particular demographic groups, including seniors and minority populations. And more on that in just a moment.

In the category of supplies and support, the President, as of today, has signed 52 major disaster declarations. Vermont was the latest approved. And states have stood up some 27,000 National Guard that are aiding in coronavirus response.

On the critical subject of ventilators, we do have currently more than 8,000 ventilators in our Strategic National Stockpile and distributed more to the Navajo Nation and to Colorado today. But also today, we received the good news that the first delivery of newly manufactured ventilators from General Electric and Hamilton arrived at the Strategic National Stockpile. And as the President said, we'll be adding newly manufactured ventilators to our resources to be available as the coronavirus epidemic reaches critical communities around the country.

On the subject of the air bridge, four flights were scheduled to arrive today, primarily focused on gloves for our incredible healthcare workers. One flight alone had nearly 19 million gloves - another 8 million, another 15 million, and the like. And the American people, I think, would be very proud to see this vast array of, now, well more than 50 flights that are bringing in supplies from all over the world. And, again, working through FEMA, we're directing those resources with the guidance of our scientific experts to the communities most in need.

As we announced yesterday, the White House Coronavirus Task Force has requested that CDC and our team assemble data on the unique impact that we're seeing reported on African Americans from the coronavirus. Dr. Fauci spoke about it yesterday and will reflect on his perspective on that as well.

Tomorrow, with the Surgeon General and others on the White House team, we'll be speaking with leaders in the African American community. And, as Dr. Fauci will reflect, there are - have been historic challenges in the healthcare of the African American communities, particularly in our inner cities.

And now, more than ever, I'll just say from my heart to all of the - all of our African American family members: Now, more than ever, practice the guidelines. Look after those most vulnerable people that have underlying serious health conditions. It's more important than ever that we all put those principles into practice.

Finally, today, I'm going to have - after we hear from Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx, I'm going to ask Dr. Redfield to step up because today the CDC will be publishing new guidance on essential critical workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 but don't have any symptoms - who don't have a temperature and don't have any reason to believe that they have the coronavirus.

At the present moment, the guidance is that if you have been in proximity to someone who did test positive for the coronavirus that - the guidance of CDC is that, that even with essential critical workers in industries from healthcare to food supply, that we asked people to stay home for 14 days. The new guidance tonight will hopefully

make it clear that there would be an opportunity for those people playing such an incredible role in our nation's response to be able to return to work and to do so safely.

And finally, let me just say again now how inspired we are at the response of the American people to the coronavirus epidemic. Each and every day, as we see the beginnings of encouraging news - the low and steady numbers in California and Washington State, and now beginning to see numbers of hospitalizations going down and new cases leveling and, in some cases, going down - we all hope it is the beginning of a trend.

But we also hope it is - it's an encouragement to every American to keep doing what you're doing, not just for your own health and for the health of your loved ones, but because we want to make sure that all of us are doing our part to make sure that the fewest number of Americans possible are exposed to the coronavirus.

And given the fact that this, I remind you, is three times more contagious than the flu, each of us has a role to play in slowing the spread. That's what the 30 Days to Slow the Spread is all about. It's about protecting your health. It's about making sure that that our healthcare workers are - and our healthcare system is not overwhelmed by the coronavirus.

And ultimately, it is about saving lives. We talk about the numbers - and I'm going to ask Dr. Birx to come up and reflect on them - but I think all of us know this is one American at a time. It's one heartbreak at a time. And having lost loved ones in my life, just like everyone here and everyone looking on, we want to work every day to make that number of losses the lowest possible. And it will take all of us to do it and to keep doing exactly what we're doing through today.

Dr. Birx?

DR. BIRX: Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

I just want to start where the Vice President left off. I come out of the services; I'm Army. When you - we always talk about honoring the fallen. And I think, for every American, what we can do now to honor the fallen that have fallen, and given their - really, their deaths to this just horrible disease; to the healthcare workers that are on the frontlines trying to save every single one, to honor them; and to honor our elders and the individuals that we know are at the greatest risk for bad outcomes, we all need to continue to do our work.

Yes, the number of cases has stabilizing - or is stabilizing, but I do want to go through those numbers with you because we talk about these as micro-epidemics in metro areas and in rural areas.

So, in the New York metro area - which includes, obviously, Northern New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island - there are still 11,000 new cases per day and their positivity rate on their testing is still in the 40 percent-plus range. So there's still a significant amount of disease there and everyone needs to continue to follow the guidelines.

New Orleans metro area - 800 new cases per day, but a seropositivity rate on their testing of 28 percent. Detroit metro area - 1,400 cases per day, 26 percent positivity. Chicago - 1,200 cases per day and 18 percent. Boston - 18 percent positivity, 1,100 cases per day. Denver has fallen to 180 cases per day, but still has 15 percent seropositivity in their testing. California and Washington have stayed stable at about - Seattle, 350 cases per day. On the LA metro area - 800 cases per day, but their test-positive rates are remaining in the 9 percent range.

And so this really gives us some idea of what it takes. They have been continuously mitigating. Imagine what we're talking about - New York going from 40-plus percent seropositivity and 11,000 cases a day, down to the LA metro area of 800 cases per day and 9 percent.

So, this is what, when the President talks about reaching the top and coming down, those are the kinds of things we need to see. And the only way we will see them is if every American continues to follow the guidance.

Now, in the Philadelphia metro area, where I come from, it's 1,400 cases per day. This, of course, includes Camden, and the counties around the Philadelphia metro, and Wilmington. And in the Baltimore and the Washington, D.C., area - 15 percent seropositivity and 500 cases per day, and 200 cases per day in Baltimore.

This is how we're looking at it - county by county, metro by metro, rural region by rural region - to make sure we don't miss anything. And we're triangulating testing data with the attack rates, with the hospitalization, with the number of cases, and really creating a mosaic of who needs what when to ensure that every American is served well.

I had a great call today with a group of pediatricians, the head of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and with the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Behind the scenes and working every day are the pediatricians fielding those phone calls from every concerned mother, and, of course, grandmothers like myself, and protecting our children every day to ensure that they have access to the medical care that they need while this is happening. And to every pregnant woman out there, I was very reassured, hearing from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. They have put amazing things in place to protect every pregnant woman. They have been social distancing in their offices. They have increased all of the disinfecting. They have lengthened the time between clients. To every pregnant woman: Don't miss your appointments. If your OB thinks you need to be there, you should go. And please know that on the labor and delivery wards they are doing everything to protect you and their babies. They are committed to you. They are absolutely committed to you having a good experience. Make sure - if your physician believes you should be in the hospital for your delivery, make sure you're following their guidance. We don't want any pregnant women to suffer a bad outcome during this time.

So, again, I just want to conclude by thanking the American people and recognizing the number of people we're losing per day is serious to all of us and it could be so much worse, but our frontline healthcare providers and the way they're talking to each other about how to improve care for every individual that they serve - you see them on the TV, you see them in the emergency room, you see what they're up against - this is how we can honor them, is to make sure we continue to put, as Dr. Fauci always says, put your foot on the gas, and make sure that we continue to strongly mitigate, and really protect those with preexisting conditions.

And finally, those preexisting conditions, we know now, include asthma. So, asthma, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes - any of these conditions - renal disease - no matter what age, please make sure you're following the guidelines to protect those individuals in your household. We know they're more susceptible to a worse outcome.

We don't think that anyone's more susceptible to getting infected. I want to make sure that everyone understands: Everybody is susceptible to getting infected. This virus is very transmittable, as we well know. But we need to protect those that need our protection the most.

So thank you all for what you're doing to get the message out to ensure that we continue to protect each other in this very difficult time.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Great. Dr. Fauci, please.

DR. FAUCI: Thank you, Mr. Vice President. And just to follow up and underscore what Dr. Birx has said: As I've said many times from this podium, the spectrum of going from infection to getting ill to requiring hospitalization to intensive care to death - and what is the most striking thing that, obviously, is so sobering to us, is when we see the number of deaths, we know now for sure that the mitigation that we have been doing is having a positive effect, but you don't see it until weeks later.

Remember, this past weekend, when we - all of us got up in front of this podium and mentioned that this was going to be a really bad week, at the same time, we were saying that we would hope we would start to see a little bit of a change in the daily hospitalizations, intensive care, and intubations. And New York is starting to see that.

So I say that, but I drop back a bit. Don't get complacent about that, because what's going to happen two and a half weeks from now is really what's going to happen with regard to the people who are getting new infections. As Dr. Birx said, everybody is almost certainly as susceptible as anybody else to getting infected - it's what happens to you after you get infected.

And again, to just keep emphasizing we need to keep mitigating. We know that this is something that is a strain on the American public, but it's just something that we have - not only the only tool, it's the best tool.

And to just shift a bit to what we said yesterday regarding the African American community, it is very painful to see - and I've seen it throughout my entire medical career - that the health disparities in the minority community, but particularly the African American community, puts them at risk - apart from coronavirus issues, puts them at risk for diseases much more so than the general population.

The double whammy that you suffer now is when you have this terrible virus, which essentially preys, in its

ultimate deleterious effects, on people with those underlying conditions.

And since that is more predominant in the African American population, we want to double down and say to the young people, to the elderly people in that community, to please try as best as you can to protect yourself if you're a younger person, and to please protect the people who are susceptible: your grandmother, your grandfather, your elder uncle, the people who have these underlying conditions.

Because we are not going to solve the issues of health disparities this month or next month. This is something we should commit ourselves for years to do. But what we can do now, today, is to prevent people who are put at higher risk because of the demographic group from getting into a situation which is much, much more deleterious than the general population.

So I plead with all of us in the population, but particularly for those of us, our brothers and sisters in the African American community, because we know that mitigation does work. The reason we know it works is the question that was asked about the numbers, that - why they came down with the projections. Because remember, what you do with data will always outstrip a model. You redo your models, depending upon your data, and our data is telling us that mitigation is working.

So, again, as Dr. Birx said, keep your foot on the accelerator because that's what's going to get us through this.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It's true.

Dr. Redfield?

DR. REDFIELD: Thank you, Mr. Vice President. I just wanted to follow up. One of the most important things we can do is keep our critical workforce working. And I think you heard it said that we have many different critical workforce industries in this country. Obviously, first responders, healthcare workers. But as you heard, it's also individuals who helped maintain our food supply, et cetera.

And so what CDC has done is that we've really looked at the essential workforce and how to maintain that workforce, particularly at this time as we begin to get ready to reopen and have confidence in bringing our workforces back to work.

And so we put out a new guidance for essential healthcare workers who've been exposed to the coronavirus. These are individuals that have been within six feet of a confirmed case or a suspected case. And so that they can - under certain circumstances, they can go back to work. If they're asymptomatic, as the Vice President, they could go back to work if they do several things, as we say here - take their temperature before they go to work, wear a face mask at all times, and practice social distancing when they're at work.

What we'd ask them not to do, when they're at work, is - we want them to stay at home if they're sick. We want them not to share objects that would be touching their face. And we would like them not to congregate in break rooms, lunch rooms, and crowded places.

And then the second slide. If we're talking to the employers of these critical industries, we would ask those employers to take the employee's temperature and assess their symptoms before starting them back to work. If the employee does become sick, we want them to be sent home immediately. We'd like them to increase air exchange in the buildings, and increase the frequency of how they clean common surfaces, and really begin to get these workers back into the critical workforce so that we won't have worker shortage in these critical industries.

So that's the new guidelines that CDC will be posting today.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And those will be available at CDC.gov. And thank you, Dr. Redfield.

And questions for anyone on the panel? Please.

Q Just a couple things to clarify. The 500 million masks that the President mentioned that are being developed, are those for healthcare workers? Or are you planning to actually hand out masks to the American public?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think the focus has been to make sure that our healthcare workers and our healthcare system has the supply. And with regard to what we're gathering from literally around the world and from manufacturers in the United States, is first being deployed to states to the hospital systems.

But I must tell you that whether it be the Hanes company or other companies, we're seeing manufacturers in America that are - that are recognizing the growing demand for masks by the American people and are spinning up

production literally by the hour.

But our focus - our continuing focus is on making sure that healthcare workers have the personal protective equipment to do their job safely and provide the level of care that every one of us would want.

Please.

Q Thank you, Mr. Vice President. Kansas Governor Laura Kelly says that she has put in seven requests to FEMA for supplies from the stockpile and those have not been fulfilled. So will Kansas be getting any of the ventilators, because the request included ventilators? And does she need to be calling the White House instead? Have you spoken with her directly?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have not spoken to the governor directly, but I'll - I'll reach out this evening, certainly. In our conference call with governors this week, we were - we spoke to them about the approach that we are taking. You know, traditionally, governors are accustomed to - when - when a hurricane strikes the Gulf Coast, when wildfires strike out west, when flooding or tornadoes hit in places like Indiana, you're accustomed to have a declaration of emergency approved and then resources flow from FEMA.

In this situation, as we deal with a nationwide declaration and an epidemic, what we've explained to governors is that what President Trump has directed is that we - we leave no stone unturned to find resources around the country and around the world, including ventilators, and we make sure, as - as the coronavirus epidemic impacts individual areas, that the healthcare workers and the families and the patients impacted have what they need, when they need it.

And what I would say to the people of Kansas is that we're looking at their numbers every day, just as in the case of every state in the country. And - and we're going to work our hearts out to make sure that - that as - as the coronavirus cases emerge - and we hope that through the great work that Kansas has done on social distancing and mitigation - the people of Kansas have done a remarkable job - that - that we may well be to a place where their existing resources and capacities are present.

But we want people to know that - that, taking the counsel of Dr. Birx and our entire healthcare team, we're focusing - just as we did first in Seattle, California, and - and now in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Louisiana, the Detroit area, the Chicago area - we're going to make sure that those resources go in that order.

Q And so, because you brought up social distancing and the work that Kansas has done, there is actually controversy right now over her order to limit the number of people in religious gatherings to 10 people. Should states be telling religious institutions how many people can gather if it's to stop the spread of the coronavirus?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, the President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America ask every American to avoid any gathering of more than 10 people. And that's on the advice of all of our best scientific experts as a way that we can - we can slow the spread.

But as we've made clear to every governor, we - we defer to our governors in what they believe is the best and appropriate practice in their states, and we'll support those local decisions.

Yes, please.

Q Thank you. In his opening statement, the President said there were 10 drugs that are now in clinical trials. Would hydroxychloroquine be one of those?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I can - I can speak to that just - and then I'd - I'll invite Dr. Birx, Dr. Fauci to come forward.

We do have - I believe we will have roughly four separate clinical trials underway studying hydroxychloroquine, but it's important to remember that - that, as the President has made the point many times, the FDA has approved what's called off-label use. And so, in consulting with your physician, if your physician determines it's appropriate to write a prescription for hydrochloroquine, we're working today to make that available across the country. It's broadly available today as an anti-malaria medication, but we're working around the country and internationally to increase that supply. But we are - we are studying it in at least four different clinical trials. And Dr. Fauci can speak to that.

DR. FAUCI: Yeah. Yeah, so the easiest - thank you for that question. The easiest way to find out is to just go to

ClinicalTrials.gov, and it will tell you everything that's there.

There are a number of different clinical trials, some of which are randomized controlled trials, which, as I've said many times in this podium, to me, it's the optimal way to determine ultimately if something is safe and effective and works.

But there are a lot of different ways that - that this being looked. It's being looked at against the placebo. It's being part of a multi-arm trial, comparing it with others. There is a trial that was recently started actually in prophylaxis among healthcare workers. So there were several of these.

In addition to that, there is what was just mentioned now: that any physician, in consultation with their patient and back and forth, can make the decision to use the drug on an off-label.

So we have two things that are simultaneously going on: We're having actual formal clinical trials and the off-label use.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Very good. Next, please.

Q I want to turn back to the disproportionate rates of black deaths, when it comes to the coronavirus. Dr. Fauci, you have been talking about this for weeks, that there were underlying health issues - people with underlying health issues are most at risk. But if we knew that blacks disproportionately have fallen into that category, why wasn't the CDC prepared to gather this data in real-time to work to fight this?

DR. FAUCI: Well, I'm not sure. But we have the Director of the CDC here who could answer that question. But let me - let me try to just take it from - from a different perspective.

The health disparities that exist are not anything that started with coronavirus. They were - they were there. So there isn't much you can do about the disparity. The thing you can do is to make an extra special effort to protect people who have the underlying conditions. So it's the same way as we say, Well, the elderly and those with underlying conditions.

Unfortunately, the African American community has a much greater proportion, population for population, of these underlying conditions. So the best weapon we have right now is what I said in my opening remarks - is to do whatever we can to get them to realize that what we need to do is to protect them from getting infected and to also protect them from inadvertently and innocently bringing the infection to people who have these underlying conditions.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, please.

Q Thank you, sir. Can you explain the thinking behind these 100 ventilators that were given to Colorado when other states, like Kansas, have had trouble getting ventilators? And can you say whether a personal relationship with the President is helping states like Colorado get these ventilators? I mean, there are 15 states that have more cases than Colorado.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, what I could say is that we've been watching Denver very closely. And like many of the other key areas that I touched on, it - we're - we're beginning to see some encouraging news. But in our interactions with - with the governor and with local officials and with the senator, we've made an effort not only in Colorado, but around the country to be particularly responsive to states where - where we've seen a growth in cases.

But I'm going to let Dr. Birx speak to that as well. There's - literally beginning with New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Louisiana, the Detroit area in Michigan, the Chicago area, there's a series of other cities, including Denver, that we've been watching very carefully. And while we're beginning to see some encouraging news, we want healthcare workers in those communities to know for certain that that we're going to move resources into those areas where we see significant outbreak.

Q Can you just address the point about whether -

DR. BIRX: Yeah.

Q - whether individual governors' relationships with the - with the President are getting preferential treatment?

DR. BIRX: I can tell you, within that decision complex is not just the absolute number of cases, it's the hospital capacity and what each of those hospitals have.

So remember, I think a couple of days ago, we talked about how the states are sending the information about ICU

beds, hospital beds, ventilator needs.

So different states have different - which I don't think any of us probably knew before this, but there are some states that have lots of ventilators, and there's other states that, proportion to their population or by their cases of COVID, have less. And so I'm sure Denver and Colorado fit into that model where there were hospitals that had less ventilators proportionately and were needed for the cases that we're seeing.

So, that's the kind of analysis. So, every state that has cases - a little - has a few cases more than Colorado have all received ventilators, except for, I think, Texas. And that's just because they are just starting - remember we started - Colorado was one early on the curve, so they have many more people who have moved through that progress and are in need of ventilators. Texas is very early in their curve in both Dallas and Houston. So that's what I was talking about; each of these are a micro curve that we have to follow independently or we would be making general decisions, rather than specific decisions by geography.

Q Mr. Vice President, a follow-up on the churches question. You're obviously a very religious man. Will you be going to church on Sunday?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We'll be attending church right in the living room at the Vice President's Residence, where we have been attending for the last several weeks.

Q And is that the guidance?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And the advantage is we get to go to our home church in Indiana.

Q Is that the same example you'd like to see churches around the country, regardless of what governors are saying, do as well?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America are very clear. That during this 30 days, we are calling on every American in every state first to listen to your state and local authorities, but right after that to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people, avoid unnecessary travel, use drive-through at restaurant instead of going into the restaurant. We are, as these health experts have told you, seeing real evidence that we're slowing the spread, that these mitigation efforts are having a strong impact.

And tonight, as many people even at this hour on the East Coast are beginning to sit down to a Seder dinner - it's the beginning of Passover - and with Easter celebrations this Sunday, we just want to encourage every American to heed the counsel of the guidelines, put those into effect, and know that in so doing we'll hasten the day - we'll hasten the day that we put the coronavirus in the past and we reopen our country.

Q Mr. Vice President -

AIDE: Last question.

Q Can I ask a question of Dr. Birx or Dr. Fauci?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course.

Q As you are both probably aware, there's a lot of misinformation and conspiracy theories out there about the coronavirus. There are some commentators who are suggesting that the number of dead are being inflated because they're saying that people who are dying with other issues are being listed as COVID-19 deaths. Perhaps, you've seen some of this commentary. You may be too busy to see it, but it is out there.

What do you say to those folks who are - who are making the claim without really any evidence that these deaths are being padded, that the number of COVID-19 deaths are being padded? For example, somebody who might die from a number of factors, but had coronavirus are being listed as coronavirus deaths. And because of that, the number is being inflated.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That's a fair question. And you might also speak about the converse.

DR. BIRX: Yeah, we've been hearing the converse too.

DR. FAUCI: We've been hearing the opposite.

DR. BIRX: (Laughs.) We've been hearing both sides of that. I - you know, I think, we've made it very clear, I think, every time I've been up here, about the comorbidities.

And so, they - most of the people - and we've talked about the Italy data. The majority of the Italians who succumbed to this had three or more comorbidities. So, this has been known from the beginning. So those

individuals will have an underlying condition, but that underlying condition did not cause their acute death when it's related to a COVID infection. In fact, it's the opposite. Having an underlying condition and getting this virus, we know is particularly damaging to those individuals.

We don't know all the pathophysiology. I wish we did right now. We see that a lot of vasculitis - where Tony and I came from. Tony actually - Dr. Fauci started in the vasculitis in Wegener's. So, I mean, these are things we have studied for a long time. We are trying to understand the pathophysiology.

But what we can tell you at this moment: If you have asthma, if you have renal disease, if you have diabetes, if you have hypertension - these are preexisting conditions that put you at a greater risk to having a worse outcome.

DR. FAUCI: Yeah. So, Jim, just to add a comment to that because, you know, having been through other serious issues, particularly the very painful early years of HIV-AIDS, when people talk about conspiracy theories - you will always have conspiracy theories when you have very challenging public health crises. They are nothing but distractions.

You know, I can assure you we have so much to do to protect the health and the welfare of the American people that I would just hope we just put those conspiracy stuff, and let somebody write a book about it later on, but not now.

Q Dr. Birx, you said something about not enough tests being performed because some of the labs - the machines aren't running. Did you want to clarify that? What did you mean by 80 percent weren't running and -

DR. BIRX: So, I have a call with them at 8:00 p.m. tonight. Every single one of those 120 laboratories - I think 87 of the laboratory directors have confirmed that call. It has to do with a machine called an Abbott m2000. It's a very high-throughput machine. We have a million tests out there.

I made a big push and Abbott was extraordinary about getting those out to the labs. I mean, this is not sitting in a warehouse. These are physically in these laboratories, sitting there right now.

Q The machines aren't running?

DR. BIRX: They're not running. So we've only run 88,000 tests in three weeks off of those machines with a million test kits. So, as someone who has worked in a lot of laboratories, to have a machine that is needed - because we could have screened every healthcare worker - these machines are in every place in the country. So, they could have screened, in these last three weeks, 100 percent of the healthcare workers across the country that needed these rapid - these tests to be done. And they're high throughput.

So, I have a call with them at 8 o'clock to really talk about -

Q Can the President compel that to happen? Can an order be given?

DR. BIRX: Well, I asked the Vice President to give me a chance to talk to my colleagues first.

Q Okay.

DR. BIRX: But we have a call with the CEOs of those hospitals tomorrow.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Great. Thank you. That's a really important question. And it underscores the fact that Dr. Birx pointed out that, with new - new test, Abbott Laboratories - with their - FEMA has been busy distributing to states around the country. We purchased 1,200 of these machines to be able to do these tests. But there's 18,000 all across America.

And so let me - let me just renew our call to all the - all the hospital administrators and lab operators around America to go and identify those Abbott Laboratories machines. And know that that's - while we've already tested more than 1.9 million Americans, our - our short-term objective is to test as many Americans as possible as this - as we see the coronavirus epidemic emerge in areas around the country, we want to surge those resources. We want states that haven't seen a significant outbreak to have access to that 15-minute test.

And ultimately we - as we go forward, once we - as, you know, I think President Trump said today, nobody wants to open the country up more than him and I can attest to that. But we're going to open it up when we can do so responsibly, putting the health of America first.

And to reopen America and to stay open, America, we're working around the clock to continually expand the kind of testing that will allow us to do what these experts call surveillance so that, in every state in the country, once we

put this chapter of coronavirus behind us, we hope and trust sooner rather than later that when the next Fall comes, that we will have a vast array so that CDC can do what it does so well. And that is, when a particular disease emerges, CDC surges personnel, does contact tracing, isolates that individual. So we're just really calling on - calling on all of our partners in the laboratories and in hospitals around the country to identify those Abbott Laboratory machines and help us continue to scale up and expand testing. But to every American, let me again just say thank you. Thank you for what you're doing. We are in the midst of a week of heartache and I want to assure every American who has suffered loss that we're with you. We're praying for you and your families. And we're - and we'll continue to work our hearts out to make sure these incredible healthcare workers, who are inspiring every single one of us all across the country every day, have the resources and support and the equipment to do their job safely, to provide the level of care that any American family would want for their loved one, and to be able to go home safely to their families. And the key to all of that - the key for the next 22 days is 30 Days to Slow the Spread. And I just encourage every American, if you haven't done so recently, go to [Coronavirus.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). Print off your own copy. Pick up the phone and call a friend and just tell them that - that you heard from the experts, you heard from the President and our team that we're beginning to see glimmers of hope. Extraordinary progress in California and Washington is a tribute to the people of those states and the leadership of those states. But the beginning of stabilization and perhaps even leveling in New York and New Jersey, Louisiana, and Detroit is a testament to the people of those communities, to the leadership of those states. But understand that every one of us has a role to play to protect the most vulnerable among us and to save lives by putting the guidelines into practice, just like you've been doing every day since they were first announced. So thank you all and we'll see you tomorrow. (The White House, the United States)

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