JSA
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Lebanon, Maine Select Board
Town Office Conference Room
Minutes –Meeting
Thursday, January 7, 2021

Members Present	Others Present
Charles Russell, Jr. – Chairman	James Duprie
Paul Philbrick – Vice Chair **EXCUSED**	Deborah Wilson
Ernest Lizotte, Jr. – Selectman	Dede Bruce
Corinna Cole – Selectman **EXCUSED**	Ben Thompson
Jeffrey Adams – Selectman	Kyle Fitzsimons (via phone)

For complete meeting minutes please view the meeting in full at **https://www.youtube.com/c/TownofLebanon**

5:37 Pledge of Allegiance

5:40 Chief Flynn provided an update on the fire engine/truck situation. Chief states the department will rent a vehicle for $1500.00 month. Chief also reports that he got an estimate on a pumper/tanker combination and the cost will be between $450,000 and $500,00 to purchase. The company has said that they will use the monies paid for the rental as a credit toward the pumper/tanker if we purchase it. Chief Flynn would like the Town to put the following vehicles out to bid; Tanker 6, Engine 3 and the old chief's vehicle. The Chief there will be a need for an extra set of gear and air packs for each member due to the marijuana business. Chair Russell asked how many sets will be needed. The Chief advised that there are now 45 employees on the Fire Department.

6:15 Resident, Kyle Fitzsimmons, was at the Capital in DC during the protest. Mr. Fitzsimmons gave his account of events.

6:33 The BOS signed time off and training requests.

6:35 The BOS reviewed Old Business. The Chief will get information about a sharp program.

6:40 Selectman Adams discussed the following State issues:

- the way the State has been handling vaccines, COVID-19 and mandates.
- The State is over budget and will either raise taxes or implement fees.
- The Governor and democrats refuse to reconvene the legislature.
- Selectman Adams has documents regarding Maine Officials and is making those documents part of the official record of this meeting.

7:00 The American Legion has been working hard on the Old Town Hall which is now the new American Legion Hall. Selectman Adams, as a private citizen, will join the Patriot Party in Maine and join a class action lawsuit against the Governor, the new speaker and Troy Jackson to have them removed from office.

7:10 Chair Russell motioned to enter into Executive Session for Personnel Matters pursuant to 1 MRSA § 405 (6)(A). Selectman Adams seconded. Vote taken; vote carried. (Philbrick & Cole not present)

9:30 Chair Russell motioned to adjourn. Selectman Adams seconded. Vote taken; vote carried. (Philbrick & Cole not present)

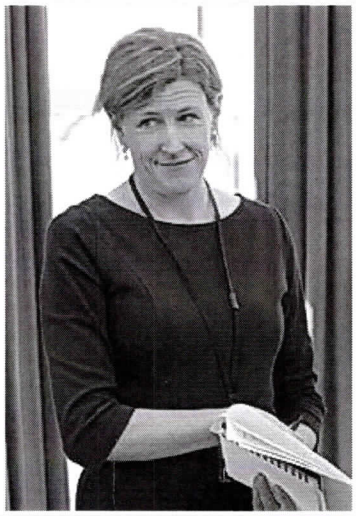
WIKIPEDIA

Jeanne Lambrew

Jeanne Lambrew is a United States professor of public affairs and health policy. She served in the Obama administration as Deputy Director of the White House Office of Health Reform.

In December 2018, Lambrew was nominated to serve as Commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services by Governor-elect Janet Mills.[1]

Jeanne Lambrew



Commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Incumbent

Assumed office
January 2, 2019

Governor	Janet Mills
Preceded by	Bethany Hamm (Acting)
Personal details	
Political party	Democratic
Education	Amherst College (BA) University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (MA, PhD)

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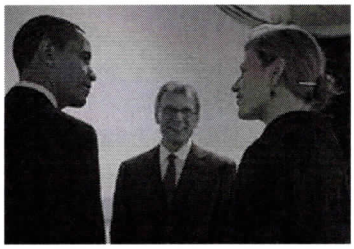
Education

Lambrew earned a master's and a Ph.D. in Health Policy at the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her bachelor's degree came from Amherst College.

Career



Barack Obama, Tom Daschle, and Jeanne Lambrew.

On May 11, 2009, Jeanne Lambrew was named by newly confirmed Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to the position of director at The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Health Reform.[2]

Lambrew has been a leading health expert alternately in academic and government. Her research interests include the uninsured, long-term care, Medicaid and Medicare. From 1997 to 2001, she helped analyze health issues and develop proposals as a program associate director at the Office of Management and Budget and as the senior health analyst at the National Economic Council.

Beginning as an assistant professor at Georgetown University, Lambrew moved to the Department of Health and Human Services during the 1993–94 push for health care legislation, then went on to coordinate budget proposal analysis in 1995. She later worked at the George Washington School of Public Health and Health Services as an associate professor. She moved to the Lyndon Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, where she was an associate professor of public affairs. She has also served as a senior fellow at Center for American Progress,[3] and she cowrote a book, *Critical: What We Can Do About the Healthcare Crisis*, with former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle.

At a December 11, 2008, press conference, President-elect Barack Obama announced that Lambrew would serve as deputy director of a newly created White House Office of Health Care Reform under Tom Daschle, who was also designated to serve as Secretary of Health and Human Services.[4] Due to Tom Daschle withdrawing from both positions over tax issues, Nancy-Ann Min DeParle was appointed director. Under an executive order on April 11, 2009, Lambrew

was subsequently appointed the director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Health Reform, led by Kathleen Sebelius. The Department's Office of Health Reform will work closely with the White House Office of Health Reform, headed by Nancy-Ann DeParle.[5]

Lambrew works currently at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/magazine/issues/2020-winter/the-maine-chance>

References

1. Writer, Scott ThistleStaff (14 December 2018). "Mills names Mainer with White House experience to lead state's 'most important department' " (https://www.pressherald.com/2018/12/14/mills-taps-former-obama-administration-official-to-head-dhhs/).
2. "Archived copy" (https://web.archive.org/web/20131027201503/http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/05/20090511a.html). Archived from the original (https://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/05/20090511a.html) on 2013-10-27. Retrieved 2017-09-09.
3. Bio of Jean Lambrew, Center for American Progress (http://www.centerforamericanprogress.org/experts/Lambrew.Jean.html/)
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5. "Archived copy" (https://web.archive.org/web/20090514194806/http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Executive-Order-Establishing-The-White-House-Office-Of-Health-Reform/). Archived from the original (https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Executive-Order-Establishing-The-White-House-Office-Of-Health-Reform/) on 2009-05-14. Retrieved 2009-05-15.

External links

- Appearances (https://www.c-span.org/person/?jeannelambrew) on C-SPAN

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◂ MEET THE FELLOWS

Nirav Shah, 2005

Director, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Nirav Shah is the child of immigrants from India

Fellowship awarded to support work towards an MD in Medicine at University of Chicago

NIRAV SHAH is the Director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Previously, he served as the Director of the Illinois Department of Health.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Shah served as the Chief Economist of the Ministry of Health of Cambodia, during his tenure as a Henry Luce Scholar. In Cambodia, he worked on a variety of public health programs aimed at reducing corruption in the health care system. In particular, he designed a system that reduced the number of administrative steps required to transfer funds from the central Ministry to rural hospitals, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption and graft. Dr. Shah completed both his medical and law degrees at University of Chicago. After graduating from college, he studied economics at Oxford University.

Education

- **MD MEDICINE | UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO 2008**
- **JD LAW | UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO 2007**
- **BS BIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY | UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE 1999**

Work History

- **MAINE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, DIRECTOR | MAY 2019 - PRESENT**
- **ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DIRECTOR**

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The 2021 application is open. Are you a New American who will be 30 or younger as of October 29, 2020, and who will be in graduate school full-time for the 2021-2022 academic year? Check out our eligibility requirements, learn about the Fellowships,...

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WIKIPEDIA

Paul Soros

Paul Soros (Hungarian: *Soros Pál*; June 5, 1926 – June 15, 2013) was a Hungarian-born American mechanical engineer, inventor, businessman and philanthropist. Soros founded Soros Associates, which designs and develops bulk handling and port facilities.[1][2] Soros Associates currently operates in ninety-one countries worldwide, as of 2013.[1] Paul Soros, often called "the invisible Soros",[2] was the older brother of George Soros, a successful businessman and financier.[1]

Contents

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- Early life
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Biography

Early life

Soros was born **Schwartz Pál** on June 5, 1926, in Budapest, Hungary, to Tivadar Schwartz, a lawyer and author, and Erzsébet Szűcs, the daughter of the owner of a fabric store.[2] His father had been captured by the Russians during World War I and held in a detention camp in Siberia. Soros was also a native speaker of Esperanto, a conlang.[2]

Tivadar Soros changed the family's surname from Schwartz to Soros in 1936 to escape antisemitism and the expansion of Nazism in Europe.[1][2] Tivadar Soros forged paperwork, giving the family alias and Christian names, as the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944.[2] The family fled to safe houses for nearly a year, until Soviet forces invaded the country.[3] However, the Soviets mistakenly believed that Paul Soros was a wanted SS officer and arrested him.[3] He was marched east, towards the Soviet Union with other prisoners. He managed to escape the prisoner march by ducking behind a bridge and hiding in an abandoned farm house.[2] He then walked back to Budapest.[2]

Paul Soros survived the war and emigrated to the United States in 1948.[1] He arrived in Manhattan after defecting from Hungary, then under Communist control, while traveling in Switzerland with the Hungarian Olympic ski team.[3]

Career

Soros arrived in New York City with very little money.[3] He enrolled at Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute (present-day Polytechnic Institute of New York University), where he earned his master's degree, as he could not afford the higher priced Ivy League universities.[3] He resided in a cheap apartment near Prospect Park as a student, but still struggled to pay for rent and food.[3]

Soros founded **Soros Associates**, which designs and develops bulk handling and port facilities.[1] For example, the Brazilian multinational, Tubarão, used designs created by Soros' company to quadruple Brazil's iron ore output and become the world's largest corporate iron ore producer.[2] Soros Associates now operates in 91 countries around the world.[4]

Philanthropy

Paul Soros and his wife, Daisy Soros, founded The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans, which provides funding for graduate degrees for immigrants and the children of immigrants.[1] Each year, thirty students are awarded a fellowship of up to $90,000 to cover two years of graduate tuition, as well as living and other expenses.[3] The fellows may study any subject they wish at any American university.[3] In order to be awarded the fellowship, students must demonstrate a unique "idea or talent," have accomplished something concrete through long term effort, and have been involved with the government or other organization dedicated to the ideals of the U.S. Bill of Rights.[3]

Paul and Daisy Soros founded the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship in 1998 with $50 million.[3] By 2010, they had awarded more than $30 million to nearly 400 students.[3] They dedicated an additional $25 million to the Fellowship in 2010.[3] Paul Soros served as Chairman of the Fellowship, and his son, Jeffrey Soros, became president in 2010.[3]

Later life

Soros died at his Fifth Avenue home on the Upper East Side of Manhattan on June 15, 2013, at the age of 87.[1][2] He had suffered from Parkinson's disease, diabetes, jaw cancer and tongue cancer during his later life.[3] Soros was survived by his wife, Daisy Soros (née Schlenger), who, like her husband, was a Hungarian Jewish immigrant,[5] and with whom he had two sons, Peter and Jeffrey.[6]

References

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6. "Visionary Engineer Master Pom Builder Philanthropist: Paul Soros" (http://archive.poly.edu/alumni/_docs/Giants-soros.pdf) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20160208022255/http://archive.poly.edu/alumni/_docs/Giants-soros.pdf) 2016-02-08 at the Wayback Machine retrieved July 10, 2013

External links

- Paul Soros (https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112386125) at Find a Grave

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Division of Disease Surveillance

Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention

A Division of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) - Updates and Information

DHHS → MeCDC → Disease Surveillance → Epidemiology → Airborne and Direct Contact Diseases → Coronavirus → Maine Data

Thurs 7 Jan 2021

COVID-19: Maine Data

New positive COVID-19 lab reports are being received at a faster rate than Maine CDC has been able to review them to determine if the lab result reflects (a) a new case of COVID-19 in Maine, (b) a duplicate result (where the same person has already been counted as a case), or (c) an out-of-state resident. As a result, reported case numbers do not currently reflect the total number of people in Maine who have tested positive for COVID-19. At this time, the total number of cases of COVID-19 in Maine is higher than the case numbers shown here.

Prior to November 25th, Maine CDC attempted multiple follow-up calls with every identified case of COVID-19 in Maine in order to assess whether their isolation period was completed. Since that date, Maine CDC has not conducted routine follow-up calls with every identified case, so the count of people who have completed isolations is no longer updated.

Starting December 5th, Maine CDC has focused its efforts to follow up with cases of COVID-19 on cases who are under the age of 19, over the age of 64, or who meet certain other criteria (including being hospitalized, identified as a minority, identified as having a disability, being a health care worker or first responder, living or working in congregate settings, or associated with a school or child care facility). Depending on available resources and case levels, Maine CDC may follow up with other cases who do not meet those criteria.

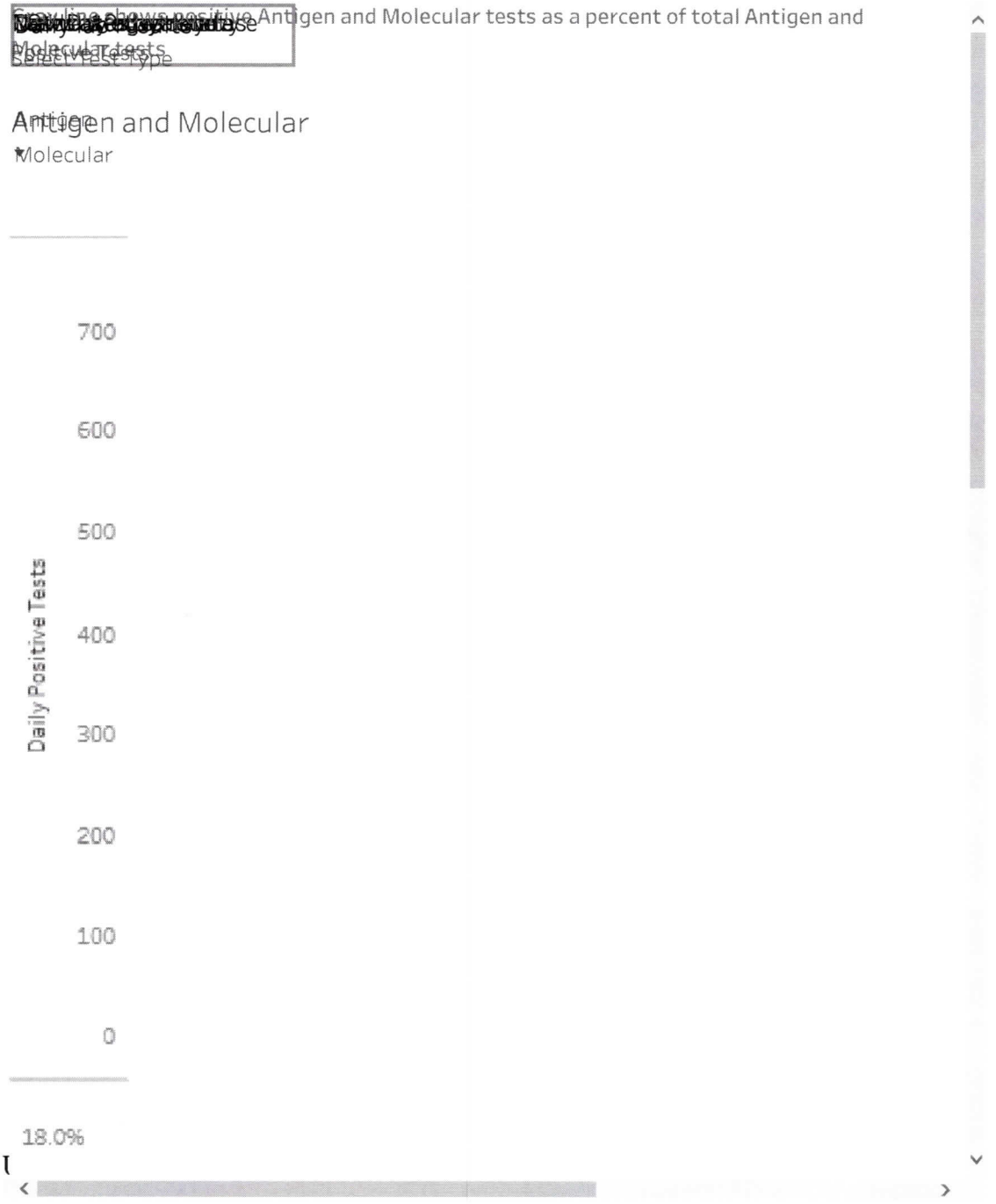
Maine CDC updates data daily by 9:30 AM with COVID-19 case investigation data included as of 11:59 PM the previous day. All data are preliminary and may change as Maine CDC investigates cases. For more information about the data, please see the "Read Details About the Data" section below.

Download csv files with the most recent cumulative case data by zip code, county, age, sex, race, and ethnicity.

Download a csv file with historical case data by county and date.

Download a csv file with syndromic surveillance gate metrics by date.

COVID-19 Case Trends



Download csv files with the most recent cumulative case data by zip code, county, age, sex, race, and ethnicity.

Download a csv file with historical case data by county and date.

Cumulative COVID-19 Cases by County

Export table to PDF

Cumulative COVID-19 Ca

Table updated: Januar

Data through: Wednesday, Januar

County
Statewide
Cumberland
York
Androscoggin
Penobscot
Kennebec
Oxford
Somerset
Aroostook
Hancock
Franklin
Sagadahoc
Washington
Knox
Waldo
Lincoln
Piscataquis
Unknown

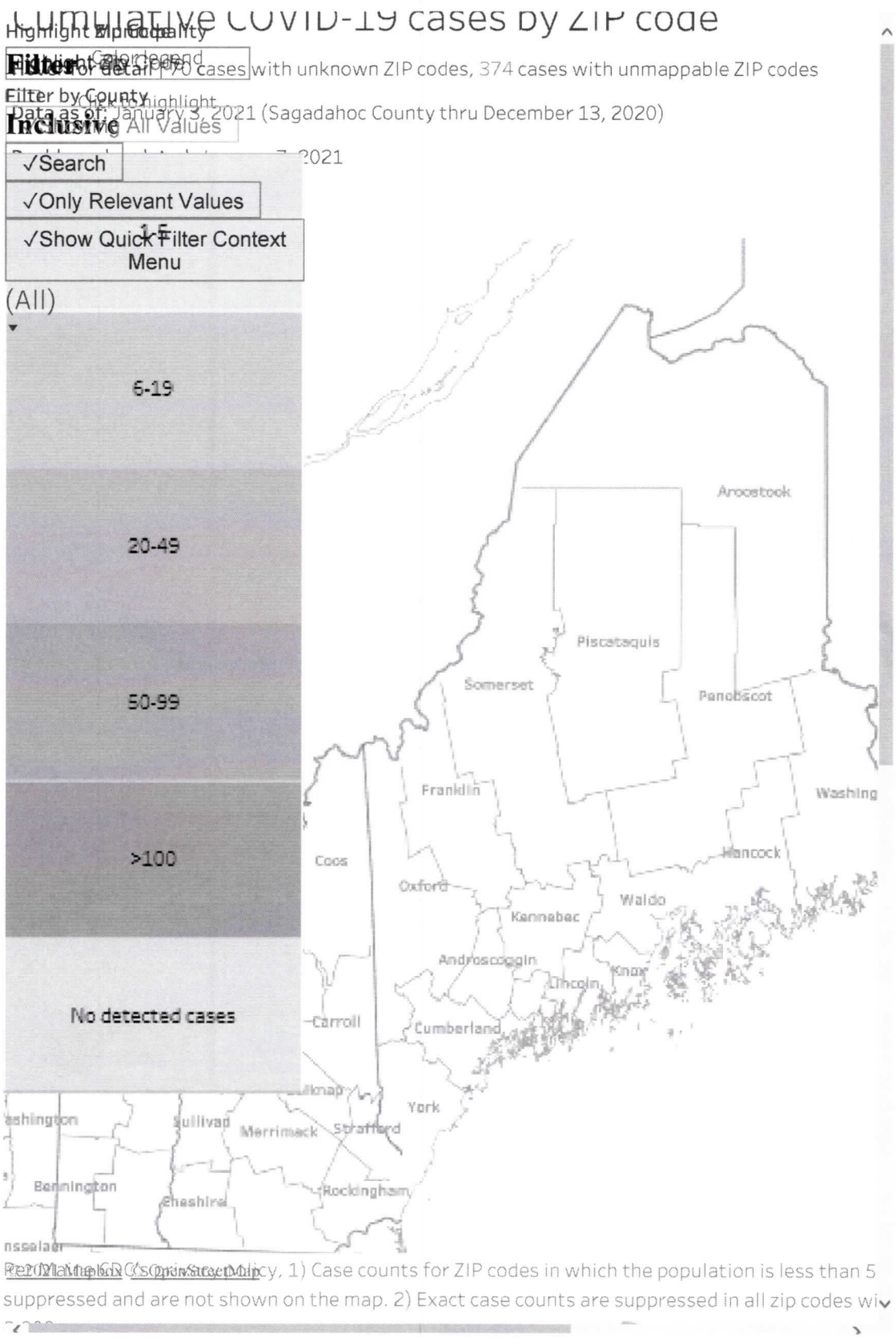
Download a csv file with the most recent cumulative case data by county.

Download a csv file with historical case data by county and date.

Maine COVID-19 Reopening Gating Metrics

Maine COVID-19 Reopening Gating Metrics

Cumulative COVID-19 Cases by ZIP Code



Per CDC policy, 1) Case counts for ZIP codes in which the population is less than 5 suppressed and are not shown on the map. 2) Exact case counts are suppressed in all zip codes wi

Download a csv file with the most recent cumulative case data by zip code.

Tables of COVID-19 Testing and Contact Tracing Data, Hospital Use, and Case Demographics

View a Table of Contact Tracing (Sara Alert) Data

Contact Tracing (Sara Alert) Data	
Number of Individuals Currently in Monitoring	**Total Number of Individuals Enrolled**
916	32,913

Maine CDC updates contact tracing data weekly.
Updated January 7, 2021 at 9:15 AM.

View Tables of Data for the Previous 14 and 28 Days

View a Table of All Reported COVID-19 Tests in Maine

View a Table of Maine COVID-19 Current Hospital Use and Capacity Data

View a Table of Cumulative COVID-19 Cases by Age

View a Table of Cumulative COVID-19 Cases by Race and Ethnicity

View a Table of Cumulative COVID-19 Cases by Sex

Read Details About the Community Transmission

Read Details About the Data

Register to be an Organ Donor

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PATIENT_C	DATA_REFI	DATA_AS_(	CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERIE	HOSPITALIZATIONS
Unknown	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	2	0	0	0
Penobscot	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	2423	24	870	122
Cumberlan	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	8140	108	3912	319
Waldo	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	392	17	208	20
Franklin	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	503	5	172	16
Sagadahoc	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	461	1	165	14
Oxford	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	1257	23	355	41
Washingto	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	416	4	175	20
Androscog	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	3011	44	1407	113
York	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	5888	72	2395	226
Kennebec	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	2036	30	820	84
Aroostook	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	804	12	169	42
Piscataquis	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	136	1	51	9
Hancock	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	608	16	217	31
Somerset	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	815	22	397	47
Knox	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	399	4	196	18
Lincoln	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	334	2	149	13

PATIENT_A	DATA_REFI	DATA_AS_(	CASES	RECOVERIE	DEATHS
30s	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	4035	1679	1
60s	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	3273	1442	35
80+	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	1714	614	220
70s	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	1888	805	108
40s	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	3661	1547	5
20s	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	4983	2035	1
<20	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	3793	1608	0
50s	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	4278	1928	15

PATIENT_R	DATA_REFI	DATA_AS_(	CASES
Not disclos	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	3357
Native Haw	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	14
Black or Afi	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	1705
Asian	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	321
Two or mo	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	243
American I	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	83
Other Race	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	628
White	1/7/2021	1/6/2021	21274

PATIENT_E	DATA_REFI	DATA_AS_(	CASES
unknown	1/6/2021	1/5/2021	7338
Not Hispan	1/6/2021	1/5/2021	19259
Hispanic or	1/6/2021	1/5/2021	493

REPORTING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

HEALTH, POLITICS

Litany of controversial decisions follows new CDC chief to Maine

Dr. Nirav Shah was heavily scrutinized for his handling of a deadly four-year public health crisis in Illinois. He starts as Maine's new CDC boss on Monday.

BY SAMANTHA HOGAN | JUNE 7, 2019

Dr. Nirav Shah, seen during an appearance on "Chicago Tonight" last year, has been hired as the head of Maine's Center for Disease Control and Prevention despite intense criticism of his

handling of a deadly public-health crisis during his time as Illinois' public health director. Photo courtesy of Chicago Tonight.

State officials acknowledged Thursday that they knew about intense criticism, a grand jury investigation and calls for the ouster of Dr. Nirav Shah over his handling of a four-year deadly public health crisis in Illinois.

They hired him anyway.

They say the new head of Maine's Center for Disease Control and Prevention acted appropriately and followed federal protocols while Illinois' director of public health.

New Maine Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew says Nirav Shah's expertise will benefit Maine.

"Throughout our consideration of Dr. Shah, he has been forthright about his experience in Illinois – which includes successes in responding to the opioid crisis and improving the health of children – and his expertise will benefit Maine," Maine Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew said in a statement issued Thursday.

And, in an email to Pine Tree Watch on Thursday night, Gov. Janet Mills had praise for Shah, who is a Henry Luce Scholar, worked for the Ministry of Health in Cambodia, and holds both law and medical degrees:

"The Department conducted an exhaustive, national search, and based on Dr. Shah's credentials, I believe Commissioner Lambrew has selected a superbly qualified individual to lead the Maine CDC."

In announcing his appointment on May 23, the DHHS lauded Shah's record of reducing infant mortality and childhood lead-poisoning rates during his time in Illinois.

But recent findings by Pine Tree Watch paint his four-year tenure there in a far different light:

- Shah was severely criticized for his handling of repeated fatal outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease – a form of pneumonia caused by a waterborne bacteria – at the state-run Illinois Veterans Home from 2015 to 2018. In all, 13 people died; 74 residents, volunteers and staff were sickened; and more were suspected of having contracted a non-fatal variation of the bacterial infection.
- The criticism started when Shah did not notify families or the public about the initial outbreak in 2015 for six days, despite suspecting an epidemic of Legionnaires' was beginning at the veterans home. That outbreak sickened more than 56 people and contributed to the death of 12 veterans that year.
- The state of Illinois and the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs are being sued by 12 families of the veterans who died from complications of Legionnaires'. None of the families has settled with the state.
- A grand jury in Illinois subpoenaed hundreds of records from Shah's department related to its handling and response to the outbreaks.

Upon learning more about Shah's time in Illinois, one Maine state representative said Friday that she isn't happy with Lambrew's decision to choose Shah.

"They gave us a really glowing report on all the wonderful things he's done ... but I have great concerns," said Rep. Beth O'Connor (R-Berwick), a member of the Legislature's Committee on Health and Human Services.

She called Shah's appointment a "poor choice" in a list of what she called questionable appointments by Mills, and said she would not have hired Shah knowing of his management record in Illinois.

"I think we could find someone better," O'Connor said, adding that she believes Shah should have been punished for his handling of the Legionnaires' crisis, particularly for "deliberately" allowing residents of the veterans home to drink "swamp water, to put it in mild terms."

"He (Shah) knew there was risk, but he let it go on anyway. Frankly, I wouldn't hire him because of that," O'Connor said.

Lambrew and Mills declined multiple requests to discuss Shah's track record in his previous job and did not answer several Pine Tree Watch questions put to them in writing this week.

Path to Maine began with early appointment in Illinois

When appointed at age 37 in 2015 by Republican Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner, Shah described the director position as a "dream job" that arrived sooner than expected. "This is a political appointment, but it is not, for me, a political job. I'm a public health person and this is the job that I would feel lucky to have at the pinnacle of my career. So, imagine how it feels to get the call 30 years sooner," Shah said in an interview with the University of Chicago, where he earned both his degrees.

But less than a year into his dream job, he became embroiled in political controversy over his decision to delay notifying families and the public about the initial outbreak of Legionnaires'.

Twelve veterans died from complications of the disease that year. And when new outbreaks occurred in three straight subsequent years – 2016, 2017 and 2018 – public outcry over the deaths of a total of 13 people and the sickening of 74 led state and federal lawmakers to order involved audits, approve emergency funding for plumbing and water-system repairs at the veterans home and conduct a day-long joint House-Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing in Chicago in January 2018.

The Illinois Legislature also voted last year to raise the cap on damages families could seek from the state for the deaths of relatives at the veterans

home, from $100,000 to $2 million, retroactive to July 2015. Rauner vetoed the bill, but lawmakers overrode his decision in November 2018.

Lawmakers also tried to change the state's bi-annual reporting laws for epidemics, suspected cases and confirmed cases of communicable diseases so that residents, families and the public would need to be notified within 24 hours of a lab-confirmed outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in a veterans home.

Illinois lawmakers and U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, both Illinois Democrats, repeatedly called for Shah to resign after a botched water-system repair at the veterans home came to light, information was withheld from the public, and the home wasn't issued a safety violation citation.

But Shah stayed in his post until the final days of Rauner's administration. Rauner lost his bid for re-election in November to Democratic challenger J.B. Pritzker, who made the Legionnaires' outbreaks a campaign topic. Durbin and Duckworth spoke out about Shah right before election day last year. They called again for his resignation on Nov. 15.

Shah was scheduled to start as head of Maine's CDC on Monday, but his arrival was delayed a week because of a family emergency. Shah could not be reached for comment on Friday.

The DHHS said in written responses to some but not all of Pine Tree Watch's questions Thursday that it conducted a national search, considered "more than half a dozen applicants," and conducted "multiple interviews with Dr. Shah and other candidates" before Lambrew offered Shah the job.

Pine Tree Watch asked DHHS officials if there was a search committee or headhunting firm involved in the process. The department didn't answer the question directly, other than to say, "numerous people within and outside of DHHS were involved in the process."

Gordon Smith, the state's new Opioid Response Director, told Pine Tree Watch on Wednesday that he met with Shah during the hiring process. Smith said he knew of the Legionnaires' controversy involving Shah.

"I think he's the most qualified candidate," Smith said. "He's enormously well qualified, and I am looking forward to working with him."

He referred further questions to Lambrew and DHHS spokeswoman Jackie Farwell.

Rebuilding a department

Mills inherited an understaffed Department of Health and Human Services when she took office in January, and the DHHS has been under heavy scrutiny following the 2018 death of 10-year-old Marissa Kennedy of Stockton Springs and the 2017 death of 4-year-old Kendall Chick of Wiscasset.

Mills' first cabinet-level selection of Lambrew, a former Obama administration healthcare policy staffer, as commissioner of the DHHS in December set the tone for a renewed focus on health and healthcare in Maine. Mills said then that she hoped Lambrew would "reinvigorate morale" and "reorient the direction" of the department.

By the time Shah's appointment was announced in May, DHHS had hired 18 new employees this year and was looking to fill an additional 40 positions, according to a department news release.

Sen. Geoff Gratwick (D-Penobscot), co-chair the state Legislature's Committee on Health and Human Services and a retired physician, said Wednesday that Maine's DHHS had been degraded by monetary cutbacks, staff turnover and the leadership for eight years of former Republican Gov. Paul LePage.

Gratwick said on Wednesday that he was pleased with the skills and leadership Shah could bring to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which is overseen by Lambrew. He noted being impressed with Shah's handling of a case of measles during his first week on the job in Illinois, which aligns with Maine's recent debate on mandatory vaccination and the role Shah will have in Maine in controlling vaccine-preventable diseases.

However, when then asked what he knew about Shah's role in the Legionnaires' crisis in Illinois, Gratwick said he was unaware of that situation. He said he wanted to learn more before commenting further.

Gratwick met with Lambrew on Thursday morning, and told Pine Tree Watch afterward that the DHHS was aware of the Legionnaires' outbreaks before hiring Shah. Gratwick shared a 2018 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that Lambrew's office had access to while reviewing Shah's application. The report outlines a CDC follow-up trip to the veterans home to investigate one of the Legionnaires' outbreaks.

Lambrew cited federal CDC reports as evidence of Shah's appropriate response to the Illinois outbreaks in her Thursday statement to Pine Tree Watch.

Gratwick said earlier Thursday that he plans to bring Shah in for a discussion with his committee, as he has done with sub-department heads hired at the Department of Health and Human Services since Mills took office. It's typical for the committee to hear the perspectives and establish a working relationship with the directors, he said.

O'Connor said she would reserve judgment on recent hires within the DHHS who were brought in to speak with the committee and would try to do the same with Shah, but she thought several of Mills selections – including Lambrew – were worthy of more scrutiny.

The committee likely will have to call a special session to speak with Shah, though, because there won't be time in its schedule before the end of the first regular session in two weeks, Gratwick said.

"We're hiring someone here to take care of Maine health in the broadest possible way, and my background perspective is that we've done a terrible job in the last eight years," Gratwick said.

Six critical days

Given the controversy and upset in Illinois, should Shah have been appointed to another high-level public health position?

The answer may center on a decision Shah made in August 2015 that he has publicly supported ever since.

The Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy, a 2½-hour drive up the Mississippi River from St. Louis, had two confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease on Aug. 21, 2015, and potentially more residents already exposed to the bacteria that can cause a fatal pneumonia in individuals over age 50. Shah and others, however, did not disclose the test results to the public for six days, despite realizing "the situation was the beginning of an epidemic," Shah said in an Oct. 16, 2015 email to a state employee.

"That timing is in line with our typical reporting protocol," Shah said in the same email uncovered by Chicago NPR affiliate WBEZ in 2017.

The 2015 decision for the Illinois Department of Public Health, Department of Veterans' Affairs and governor's office to stay quiet about the news of a possible Legionnaires' epidemic left some families in the dark about their parents' medical care.

That included Tim Miller, who found his 86-year-old father – a resident of the Illinois Veterans Home and Army veteran who served in Germany after World War II – dehydrated and curled in a fetal position in the Blessing Hospital Emergency Room on Aug. 25, 2015.

"The problem is, by the time they called us and told us something was going on, he was so far gone," Tim Miller told Pine Tree Watch on Wednesday.

Twice, as his father laid unresponsive in a hospital bed, Miller called the veterans home to ask if any illnesses were being passed between residents. He said he was told no both times.

But, in fact, a state audit released this March showed that the Illinois Department of Public Health had visited the veterans home the day before to begin investigating a potential outbreak of Legionnaires' disease.

As the state's public health director, Shah was among the people to investigate what would become a string of deadly outbreaks over the next four years at the state home. These deaths are at the center of the 12 pending lawsuits against the state of Illinois.

In October 2018, a grand jury in Adams County, Ill., where the veterans home is located, also subpoenaed the Department of Public Health for records in an investigation into its handling of the Legionnaires' outbreaks.

The grand jury later also subpoenaed records from Gov. Rauner's office and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, which oversaw the operation of the home.

No indictment has been released. Shah has not been contacted about any ongoing investigations or lawsuits, according to the Maine DHHS written responses.

When asked what Maine's protocol and timelines are for reporting diseases and outbreaks to the federal CDC, the DHHS, in written responses, would only say that "Maine CDC follows U.S CDC-recommended guidelines and protocols for disease reporting.

However, these decision are largely left up to the state, said Kristen Nordlund, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in an email response to questions on Thursday.

"There is no specific timeline or guidelines for if and when a state should request assistance from CDC (this is across diseases); that is left up to the state to decide. CDC is only involved in outbreak investigations when a health department requests additional assistance," Nordlund said.

What went awry?

A review of CDC reports, Illinois state audits, court filings and dozens of articles published by the Chicago Tribune, Chicago's NPR station WBEZ, and the Associated Press with cross-references to original source material uncovered through the news outlets' use of the Freedom of Information Act, Pine Tree Watch linked together a series of missteps related to Shah in Illinois.

Within two days of the Illinois Department of Public Health's initial visit to the veterans home in Quincy and five days of the first two confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease, Shah's team of public health officials was informed of the likely source of bacteria: a malfunctioning water tank.

The tank at the veterans home sat filled with stagnant water for more than 30 days before the system was turned back on. That stagnant water – which apparently never reached the necessary 140 degrees Fahrenheit required to kill most Legionella bacteria – released a "broth of Legionella"

bacteria into the veteran home's hot-water system, Shah wrote in an Aug. 29, 2015 email to a government spokesman.

Despite identifying the likely source of the bacteria, Shah declined to cite the facility for a violation.

"If we had wanted to cite them, we could have done so. It's a standard, not a rule," Shah wrote in the same email to the government spokesman.

Immediately upon learning of the faulty tank, however, the Illinois Department of Public Health directed the veterans home staff to make four changes:

- Isolate the broken tank from the hot water supply and empty it for swabbing
- Increase bromine (a disinfection alternative to chlorine) to 10 parts per million in the cooling tower and log it every four hours
- Stop the use of tap water for any resident care or services, and order bottled or packaged water for all potable use
- Discontinue the use of any water fixture where aerosols (such as water droplets or water vapor) are likely

Legionella cannot be passed from person to person by coughing or contact, but can be breathed in as water vapor. Fountains, spas, showers, tubs and dishwashers were therefore a risk and path for potential exposure.

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs – directed at the time by Erica Jeffries, another Rauner appointee in 2015 who resigned in May 2018 – reported to state auditors that it also held its first Legionnaires' disease training on Aug. 26, 2015, the same day as the Illinois Department of Public Health's second visit to the home. Annual training was held again in 2016, 2017 and 2018 as the outbreaks continued.

"Prior to training, staff were provided with little information on the disease, other than information discussing handwashing etiquette," according to an Illinois state audit released in March 2019.

Help from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was eventually requested by Shah, and investigators arrived at the veterans

home on Sept. 1, 2015 – 10 days after the first two cases of Legionnaires' were confirmed and eight residents had died.

The federal agency offered a series of recommended changes to the water system in September 2015, including adding filters to every water fixture at the point-of-use by residents and staff until remediation of the water system was complete.

A state audit later found this recommendation was not fully implemented until after the final outbreak in 2018.

The Illinois Department of Public Health deflected responsibility for the continued outbreaks at the veterans home in subsequent years, saying it was responsible only for providing recommendations on how to identify people who were potentially exposed and how to implement remedial measures. The department did not operate the facilities or provide clinical care, according to the state audit.

Another problem: vaccine debt

A program that Shah's office did have direct oversight of during his tenure became the subject of more criticism of his management style when it racked up a debt of an estimated $24 million to the federal government.

The debt accumulated over three years starting in 2014 – a year before Shah arrived – when the federal CDC told states they could no longer use free vaccine doses on children who qualified for the Children's Health Insurance Program, known as CHIP, WBEZ reported.

A poor tracking system for use of the free vaccines, however, led to some CHIP-eligible children receiving doses of vaccines that the state had to pay for, and to stop the mounting debt from the error, the Rauner administration ordered Shah's office in 2016 to stop providing free doses to doctors who served CHIP-eligible patients.

Doctors of CHIP-eligible kids would have to instead buy the vaccines upfront and go through a lengthy reimbursement process. Shah defended the decision, saying the repayment of existing debt was already taking away from other health programs, NPR reported.

DHHS too defended Shah's management of the program that he had oversight of two of the three years the $24 million debt was accumulated.

"Dr. Shah fixed a billing problem that started years before he assumed the role, thereby putting an end to the accumulation of debt. During his tenure, he managed a budget and staff three times the size of Maine CDC," the Maine DHHS said in written comments to Pine Tree Watch on Thursday.

Illinois transferred $3.5 million to the Illinois Public Health Association, a nonprofit, to manage the procurement of and payment for vaccines for CHIP-eligible children, but did not fully solve the problem. Shah's replacement under Pritzker was still negotiating a repayment plan with the federal CDC last month.

Questions remain for victims' families

As the five Miller siblings approach the four-year anniversary of their father's death at the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy, the youngest Tim, 48, still finds it hard that they'll never know if they did enough on their father's behalf.

Eugene Miller moved into the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy in October 2012 after living with Tim and his family. His honorable discharge from the Army in 1947 made him eligible to live there and receive dementia care.

"It was a wonderful opportunity for him to have some community with some people who had some of the same life experiences he had," his son said.

That opportunity turned into a nightmare for 13 families whose relatives died of complications of Legionnaires' disease at the home. The fatality rate of Legionnaires' was 32 percent among the residents who contracted the infection during the first outbreak in 2015. That's above normal, according to CDC data that predict that one in four, or 25 percent, who get Legionnaires' in a healthcare setting will die. Eugene Miller was among the first two people to die at the Illinois home.

Before Aug. 25, 2015, Eugene Miller could walk and eat on his own, but due to worsening dementia, could not hold a full conversation. Tim remembers Eugene had a video call to see his newest great-grandchild shortly before

he became ill and was transported to the hospital in Quincy. That's why it was a shock to find him unresponsive in a hospital bed on Aug. 25.

Tim and his next eldest brother Dennis agonized for the next four hours to find the best course of treatment for their dad, who had no clear source of infection, according to the medical advice and information they were receiving from the veterans home. They agreed comfort care at the veterans home was best, since Eugene had made it clear that he did not want to be on a ventilator at the end of his life.

"We were under the impression and belief there was nothing going on at the veterans home that could get him like this and this was the end of his life," Tim Miller said.

It was only after Dennis signed a "Do Not Resuscitate" order for their father the next day that the Miller family heard the word "Legionnaires'" for the first time. The home called that day to ask if their father could be tested for the bacteria, Tim said.

The following day, the Illinois Department of Public Health and Department of Veterans' Affairs released its first joint news release announcing the respiratory illness – nearly a week after it received positive test results of two Legionnaires' cases. Eugene Miller died the following day.

"They were more concerned with not upsetting people than, 'OK, people could die from this,'" Tim Miller said.

The Millers are among the 12 families suing the state of Illinois for conditions at the Illinois Veterans Home and wrongful deaths that resulted from Legionnaires' bacteria being in the facility's water system.

"People learn by mistakes, but I don't want them to learn on Maine citizens," Gratwick said on Wednesday as he read about Shah's handling of the outbreaks in Illinois for the first time.

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