“I am speaking out because to combat this deadly virus, science — not politics or cronyism — has to lead the way,” said the career official who had led BARDA since 2016.

22 Apr 2020 17:15

**Mail-in ballots can still be delivered without a stamp, the Guardian’s Sam Levine reports:**

Ballots without postage will still be delivered to local boards of elections, the United States Postal Service said in a statement Wednesday. “As required by federal law, appropriate postage must be affixed to all mailpieces entering into the US postal service mail stream. It is the postal service’s policy not to delay the delivery of completed absentee or vote-by-mail ballots even if no postage has been affixed or if the postage is insufficient,” Martha Johnson, a USPS spokeswoman said in a statement.

“In cases where a ballot enters the mailstream without the proper amount of postage, the postal service will collect postage from the appropriate Board of Elections.” The postal service did not immediately respond to an inquiry on whether its policy applied to other election materials, such as a request for an absentee ballot. The postal service’s policy is not new (it gave a nearly identical statement in 2018), but many voters may not know they can put a ballot in the mail if they can’t get a stamp.

The policy could have increased significance this year as it comes amid a national push to get states to pay for mail-in votes in November. Congressional Democrats are trying to secure funding to assist states in doing this in November and there are lawsuits in Georgia and Pennsylvania to force the state to pay for postage. Congressional Democrats are also trying to secure federal funding for states to pay for postage.

22 Apr 2020 17:02

Mario Koran

In a first step toward easing lockdown restrictions and reopening the economy, **California hospitals will begin to schedule essential surgeries effective immediately**, governor Gavin Newsom announced today.

California is not yet prepared to open wide swaths of society, he said, but the details on six key indicators for when and how communities will reopen - which include testing capacity and hospitalization data - are beginning to come into focus.

As restrictions are lifted, public health experts will continue to monitor data and the state is looking to train and employ a force of 10,000 tracers who can help map the spread of the virus, the governor said.

“We’re not opening up plastic, cosmetic surgeries” Newsom said. “These are important medical procedures that if not attended to will become a crisis. That’s the first modification of stay at