



## Gas Exec Refutes Reasoning Why We Can't Pump Our Own Gas In NJ

By: Steve Trevelise, June 22, 2022

How bad are gas prices in New Jersey? So bad that we will probably not heed President Biden's call for a gas tax holiday.

As Eric Scott writes on New Jersey 101.5: "Despite multiple efforts proposed by lawmakers, Gov. Phil Murphy has steadfastly refused to support suspending New Jersey's gas tax. He has said any such tax suspension should come from the federal government."

"They can print money, we can't," Murphy said."

Neither can we, governor.

So how did we get into this fine mess in the first place? Why can't New Jersey people pump our own gas? An article in the New York Post says "the New Jersey legislature has published 10 findings and declarations that detail why people aren't allowed to pump gas themselves."

**I asked Sal Risalvato of the New Jersey Gasoline-Convenience-Automotive Association to reply to the 10 findings in the Post article.**

**"Fire hazards"**

Sal's response:

Fire hazards MAY have been in an issue in 1949, but not as much today. I say MAY only because 70 years of experience in 48 other states does not show that people are burning up because of self serve gasoline. I would ask: Where are all the news stories about fires in gas stations? Fires in gas stations happen when cars drive off the road and slam into the pumps. Like Sen. Declan O'Scanlon likes to say, NJ citizens are not more flammable than the citizens from the other 49 states."

With regard to smoking, were there more or less people that smoked in 1949 than there are today? I would bet a steak dinner that far more people smoked back then than smoke today. Turn off the engine? Really? How many people don't turn off their engine now even when an attendant is pumping their gas? How many attendants inform the motorist to turn off the engine? How many motorists comply and turn off the engine even after being instructed to do so? My members report that often when an attendant instructs a motorist to turn off the engine, their request is ignored. Ultimately it leads to attendants not bothering to give the instruction to turn off the engine.

Again, let's look to other states. Is not turning off the engine really causing any problems in other states? Other than of course pissing off environmentalists that want to enforce the 3 minute limit on idling an engine. Tell that to the folks waiting to have an attendant finally become available to serve them. Will they turn off the engine while waiting at the pump for an attendant?"

### **"Helps cashiers"**

Sal's response:

Maintaining a clear view is the big issue when blocking pumps with orange cones. If I have one attendant scurrying between cars to give proper service to customers at one or two islands, it is difficult to monitor activity at pumps situated on other islands and serve customers that are physically further from the vicinity of which I am serving other customers. Again, how is this a problem in 49 other states for the past 70 years? Where are the news stories? Where are the warnings from hospitals and the medical profession because of all the burned-up people they are treating that started a fire at a gas station?

### **"Ensures compliance"**

Sal says: "See above"

### **"Insurance is a factor"**

Sal's response:

No evidence of such. If they are correct I would ask: how much higher? Double? Not likely. It still wouldn't offset the savings achieved by eliminating a labor cost. Oh yeah, fewer employees equals less insurance. Insurance is a bogus argument. It is one of what I call an argument of convenience, which means "I perceive that voters will have an angry backlash and my testicles aren't big enough to do the right thing, so let me list a bunch of bull\*\*\*\* arguments and even invent my own theories" such as "I don't believe gas stations will pass on the savings achieved by self serve."

### **"Gas fumes"**

Sal says:

This one really cracks me up. It has been 20 years since people smell gas fumes. I crack up whenever someone says, "I don't want to smell like gas." By law there are vapor recovery systems on the gas nozzles, and there is also on-board vapor recovery on every car. The DEP gets their panties all bunched up if there is even a crack in a boot on the vapor nozzle. So bunched up that there is a \$600 per day per hose fine that they are unforgiving about. Go stand next to any car having the tank filled and tell me if you smell gas.

Oh, by the way, gas vapors are what is flammable, so between no gasoline vapors, and less people smoking, the whole argument of the first point — fire hazards — is thrown out the window. Most people don't know the fact that liquid gasoline does not burn. Only the vapors that are emitted from the liquid are highly flammable.

Yes, it is possible to smell gas if it is spilled, but today's nozzles prevent spills, overfills, and certainly vapors. That's why the hose and nozzle can cost as much as \$1,600 per fueling point. One on each side of the dispenser for a total of two per dispenser.

### **"Levels out the cost of full-service"**

Sal says:

Hmmmm...seems like an acknowledgment that self-serve will likely be cheaper! So I guess this argument is only good when convenient for legislators that insist self-serve savings won't be passed on to motorists. I guess then they acknowledge that it is OK for those that wish to pump their own gas are actually subsidizing those who want someone to pump it for them. Whatever happened to the "fair share" concept? Is that only a good premise to an argument if discussing higher taxes in the wealthy?

### **"Vehicle repairs"**

Sal says:

Toooooo late! Many gas stations discovered years ago that selling coffee and chips and soda is more profitable with fewer headaches than fixing brakes and doing tune-ups. Many repair locations are actually former gas stations that closed the pumps and remained in the repair business. Self-serve gas has ZERO affect on the number of locations available to fix cars.

### **"Maintenance checks"**

Sal says:

I don't know which argument is more ridiculous than the other. Gas attendants stopped checking oil and under the hood years ago. Do you know why? Because cars have gotten so high tech and it is difficult on many cars to determine where the dipstick is to check the oil, or what cap is the proper cap to fill the oil, or washer fluid, or brake fluid, etc. There is too much liability having an attendant put washer fluid in the oil crankcase. Many gas stations actually post signs that the attendant will NOT check under the hood. This is totally unaffected by self-serve."

### **"No cost disparity observed"**

Sal says:

[Here is an FTC study](#) that was done years ago that says otherwise, specifically about NJ. Of course, since we don't have self serve, there is no way to determine that with a study in NJ today.

### **"Public welfare"**

Sal:

So does that mean that motorists that aren't allowed to pump their own gas and are not afforded the ability to achieve a 10-20 cent per gallon savings are not being harmed economically? What exactly then is the "common welfare"?

I repeat ... the facts are all with us to change the law. Any arguments put forth by opponents are not factual and are emotional only and are arguments of convenience.

What these legislators don't understand is something that I know instinctually and in my heart and gut....and that is that their fear is unwarranted and that a year after self-serve is enacted their constituents will be pleased that self-serve is permitted and that if the Legislature tried to revert back to full-serve only, then they would be skinned alive.

What would happen if the Legislature outlawed ATMs and mandated that you would have to wait on line to take cash out of your bank account? What would happen if they outlawed self-serve checkout at the supermarket or Walmart or Home Depot? Would people be happy about reverting back to waiting in line for the mandated cashier?