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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"MY MEMBERS ARE NOT WEALTHY!"

Sen. Buono says Gov. Christie's position on the minimum wage "protects the wealthy"; Gov. Christie understands that small business owners cannot afford a minimum wage increase

Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association (**NJGCA**), released the following statement today after last night's second and final gubernatorial debate between Governor Christie and Senator Buono:

"During last night's debate, Senator Buono and Governor Christie discussed two topics that really caught my attention and will significantly impact my members -- minimum wage increases and self-serve gasoline. On the issue of a minimum wage increase, I think it is important to point out (using their own words) the stark differences between Senator Buono's position and Governor Christie's. Senator Buono took this position, *'Well, the Governor said he was consistent at the last debate, and he is consistent -- he's consistently on the side of the wealthy.'* When I heard this, I jumped out of my chair and screamed at my television, **'MY MEMBERS ARE NOT WEALTHY!'**

Risalvato continued, "In last week's debate, Governor Christie demonstrated that he understands exactly how a minimum wage increase would affect our membership when he stated, *'The money doesn't come off a magic money tree. The money comes from the pockets and the hard work of the small business owners -- the people who own the convenience stores and the bodegas.'* To further the Governor's point, I would like to take a moment to provide a mathematical example of what this mandate will likely mean for our small business owner members."

"For the purposes of this example," Risalvato stated, "Let's assume that a gas station owner has five (5) employees, and he is forced to increase each salary by \$1/hour. If all of those employees work full time, the business owner's payroll costs increase \$200/week and \$800/month. Let me ask this question. Where does a small business owner come up with an additional \$800/month to cover a government mandated payroll increase?"

"While it is crystal clear that Governor Christie recognizes the implications of raising the minimum wage, what I fail to understand is how Senator Buono can repeatedly mention small businesses, and the importance of small businesses, yet she cannot do the simple math to arrive at the figures that I just presented." Risalvato asked, "Does she think that it is okay for the government to require a small business that is struggling to find an additional \$800/month for employee payroll?"

Risalvato made another observation, "Not only does raising the minimum wage negatively impact small businesses owners, but it also affects the consumer. Think back to the times that you have pulled into a gas station and had to wait in line for an attendant to pump your gas, while the islands next to you are blocked off by orange cones. The cones are there because the station owner does not have enough employees to oversee those pumps. With station owners already struggling to staff their locations, you can only imagine how raising the minimum wage will put increased pressure on these small businesses owners. When station owners are faced with increasing payroll costs, one of the clearest solutions that presents itself would be to simply reduce the workforce. However, that will mean that consumers will be faced with even more orange cones and even more time will be spent waiting in line, since station owners will continue to be unable to afford to fully-staff their locations."

"This brings me to the second issue that was discussed in last night's debate: self-serve gasoline. As I considered the consequences of raising the minimum wage, and how that could potentially lead a station owner to reduce his workforce and put up the dreaded orange cones," Risalvato said, "I began to think, '*What if those pumps didn't have to be blocked off? What if consumers could drive up to those islands and pump their own gas? Could that benefit gas station owners by allowing them to sell more volume? Could that benefit consumers by allowing them to spend less time at the gas station?*'"

Risalvato concluded, "While NJGCA does not have an official position on self-serve gasoline in New Jersey, we do recognize that there are both advantages and disadvantages to any proposed policy change. I simply want to continue the dialogue that Michael Aron began last night when he posed that very question. And more than that, I want the public and legislators to understand that **my members are not WEALTHY!** I don't tell my members how to vote, and I won't tell the citizens of New Jersey how to vote, but I can give them information and food for thought that they should consider before they enter the voting booth on November 5."

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