

Ever wonder what happens if you're caught pumping your own gas in N.J.? So did we.



Tired of waiting and ready to grab the gas pump and fill it your self? The changes of being ticketed are slim. (Larry Higgs | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)

By [Larry Higgs | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

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Sick of waiting for the station attendant to pump your gas? Ever wonder what happens if you break state law and start pumping your own gas?

In the last two years, the answer is zip. Zilch. Nada. Nothing.

The state Department of Labor and Workforce Development, which has the job of enforcing all aspects of the [state full service gas law](#), hasn't issued a ticket in the last two years to an over-anxious driver who pumped their own gas.

As of April, no summons have been issued by the labor department for violations of the law, although 49 gas stations were inspected, said Kerri Gatling, a Labor Department spokeswoman.

The same thing happened in 2014 when 21 stations were checked, she said. Two summons were issued in 2013, and 15 violations resulted from 64 inspections in 2010.

While Gatling said it's difficult to determine if customers were among those cited, gas station owners said they usually get the ticket if an official witnesses a renegade self serving customer.

"I've heard of it happening a number of times," said Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline-C-Store-Automotive Association. "It doesn't happen often."

To get ticketed, a driver would literally have to start pumping gas under the nose of a state official, who is there checking for other violations, Risalvato said. Even then, the station owner or attendant usually is cited for not stopping the customer, he said.

"Is it fair? No," he said.

The law says it's unlawful for an attendant to allow a customer to fill'er up, listing fines of between \$50 and \$250, for which the station is liable.

So how far is a gas station owner expected to go to stop a customer from going for the gas themselves to avoid being cited?

"If I tell you, don't do it and you do it, am I supposed to call the police and turn in my own customer?" Risalvato said. "If I want him to come back and buy gas again, that's not going to happen."

New Jersey could soon be the only state in the nation that prohibits drivers from pumping their own gas. [A bill pending in Oregon's legislature would end that state's ban](#) on self serve.

Even veteran police officers are hard-pressed to recall ever ticketing a driver for pumping their own gas.

"I never ran across that," said Capt. Stephen Jones, a State Police spokesman.

It's not that Risalvato doesn't sympathize with customers faced with a wait at the pump.

"On more than a million occasions I've wanted to pump my own gas. I don't like waiting," he said. "A few weeks ago, I took pictures in a gas station. Four to six islands were blocked off and I was waiting behind two rows of cars waiting to get gas. I was irritated beyond belief."

The association took on the fight to repeal the full service provision in the 1980s without success, he said. Even today, some state lawmakers ask him to explain why they can't pump their own gas, Risalvato said.

"I've had a number of legislators ask the exact same question," he said. "I have asked 'are they willing to propose a bill (to change the law)?' Some said yes they are."

Risalvato contends moving to self serve would save about 10 cents per gallon.

Should self-serve gas stations be allowed in New Jersey? (Results as of 9:00 AM on 5/12/2015)

Yes 72.55% (6,927 Votes)

No 27.45% (2,621 Votes)

Total Votes: 9,548

[This is a non-scientific poll designed to encourage reader discussion.](#)

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