



New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, and Automotive Association (**NJGCA**)  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NJGCA Joins Opportunity New Jersey! Our Mission: Save the Middle Class**

*New Jersey is facing dangerous minimum wage, paid sick leave and pension proposals  
New Jersey's entire small business economy and middle class is facing constant assault  
These proposals are devastating to NJGCA members*

Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association (NJGCA), released the following statement in response to the creation of the coalition group Opportunity New Jersey, whose mission is to increase awareness of the impact that policies and legislative action will have on the state's economy and job growth for New Jersey citizens:

"On Friday, NJGCA joined with other like-minded small business organizations to form a coalition committed to educating legislators and citizens about critical economic issues in the state, specifically paid sick leave, minimum wage, solving our pension problem and addressing our transportation funding crisis, among others. With an announcement on Friday that Senate President Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Prieto have agreed upon new language for a minimum wage increase bill, the formation of this coalition could not be more timely, and we will be very busy in Trenton in the coming weeks and months. I would like to thank Tom Bracken of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce and Michele Siekerka of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association for their leadership on these issues and for putting this coalition together. We will certainly have our work cut out for us."

Risalvato continued, "The proposal for a \$15/hour minimum wage in New Jersey has my members so concerned that three of them took time away from their businesses on Friday to attend the Opportunity New Jersey press conference, two of them traveling over 60

miles from Northern New Jersey to describe the detrimental effect that a \$15/hour minimum wage would have on them and their businesses."

"I have two attendants at my station pumping gas at all times," said Jeff O'Connor, from Summit. "If the minimum wage went up to \$15/hour, I would have two options: raise my gas prices 9 cents/gallon to cover the increased labor costs, or I can eliminate an employee and let my customers wait a bit longer to be served their gas."

Ebbie Ashabi (Ramsey) said, "I can understand why businesses are leaving New Jersey. However, gas station owners can't just pick up their businesses and move to another state when the climate in New Jersey becomes too burdensome. So we have two options, lay off employees or raise prices in order to afford our labor force. I would anticipate raising my gas prices approximately 17 cents/gallon to be able to retain all of my employees and keep my business running smoothly and efficiently for my customers."

Craig Copeland of Middletown estimated that a \$15/hour minimum wage would raise his payroll costs by \$75,000 a year. His response, "I either raise prices 16 cents/gallon, or I start laying people off. And I definitely will make sure not to have an employee working overtime again."

"As you can see," Risalvato concluded, "a \$15/hour minimum wage threatens the very existence of the small business community in New Jersey as we know it. My members are already struggling to afford their employees. Think about the orange cones that you see at gas stations, blocking off other pumps while you wait for an attendant. Each of those cones represent an employee(s) that the small business owner cannot afford now. If the station owner could afford another employee, then the orange cone would vanish. Once the state decides to impose a \$15 minimum wage and mandatory paid sick leave, it is very likely that more orange cones will sprout at gas stations across New Jersey. It is simply a matter of addition and subtraction and the resulting affordability."

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