



New Jersey Gas Tax Goes Up... A Lot

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By David Madden

It's been feared for years. Debated for months. And on Tuesday it happened.

New Jersey's gas **tax**, once the second lowest in America, has gone up 23 cents a gallon.

The tax hike, approved by legislators and signed into law in mid-October by Governor Chris Christie, will raise some \$2 billion a year for the **Transportation** Trust Fund.

The levy hasn't changed in more than a quarter century. The TTF went broke. And other **taxes** in the Garden State are being lowered or eliminated to help soften the blow.

Chances are drivers won't think much about that as they **pay** more at the pump the next time they fill up. In fact, gas station operators are bracing for a lot of complaints. Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience Store and Automotive Association, offers this advice to members on how to deal with frustrated drivers.

"Let the customers vent," he told KYW Newsradio, "and then, sooner or later, they will get over it and they will understand you are not charging any more than anybody else and you didn't have anything to do with the **price** increase."

The tax could fluctuate slightly every three months, as the rate changes with volume sold to meet revenue projections for the TTF. In fact, to get technical, the tax increase is actually 22.6 cents, based on recent gas sales in the state. The savings to those retailers, who actually pay the tax to the state before passing it on to drivers, is minimal. And it's just easier to round the number up to 23.

If you're one of those who need to vent, perhaps a deep breath and a moment of personal reflection might be in order. Tracy Noble with AAA Mid-Atlantic suggests you say things like this to yourself.

"I know that it's going to be less wear and tear on my vehicle," Noble said. "I know that I'm going to encounter less potholes during the winter driving season and I know that my commute's going to get better because there's going to be better roadways."

If that doesn't work, be comforted by this fact. You could be at a pump in Pennsylvania, where the 50 cent plus state gas **tax** is the highest in the nation.

And it's still cheaper to buy gas in New Jersey. Just not as cheap as it was a day ago.

One other thing. There's a constitutional amendment question on next week's ballot in New Jersey that deals with the gas tax. If approved, it would require that all state gas tax revenue go directly into the TTF. Funds have been diverted for other needs in the state over the last several years.