



## Guadagno: \$15 min. wage would lead to self-service gas

Nicholas Pugliese, State House Bureau  
November 30, 2016

MONROE TOWNSHIP — Once a surprising opponent of raising the gas tax, Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno did not stray too far from her usual talking points about promoting business and cutting red tape during an address Wednesday in front of a gas station lobbying group. While she did not mention her break with Governor Christie on the 23-cent increase, Guadagno did preview what some aspects of her platform might look like should she decide to run for governor next year.

As New Jersey's second-in-command and one of the Republicans likely to run for Christie's job, Guadagno told an audience of roughly 100 members of the New Jersey Gasoline-Convenience-Automotive Association that she is against raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and against requiring private employers to provide paid sick leave.

Raising the minimum wage, in particular, is an issue that is likely to figure prominently in the next gubernatorial election as Democrats who control the Legislature have made it a centerpiece of their agenda. Christie vetoed a measure in August that would have gradually increased the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2021, but Democratic leaders have said they would like to put the issue to voters in a referendum in November 2017.

"If we pass the \$15 minimum wage, you're pumping your own gas," Guadagno told her audience on Wednesday. "You go to \$15 minimum wage, you're not going to be able to hire that high school kid, or that senior citizen, or that person who is here trying to move here from out of the country."

Should New Jersey raise the minimum wage, she cautioned, more businesses would go the way of McDonald's, which recently announced that it would begin installing touchscreen ordering kiosks in its restaurants to serve more customers with fewer workers. The company's former CEO [wrote earlier this week](#) that the decision to automate a portion of its workforce was a direct result of legislation raising the minimum wage in states like New York and California.

"Minimum wage was never intended, in my mind, to provide a living wage," Guadagno said. "It won't, not in New Jersey. So let's make minimum wage what it's supposed to be, and that is a stepping stone up."

As for providing employees with paid sick leave, Guadagno told the audience that she would prefer to leave that decision up to individual businesses.

"Should the government dictate to you what you provide to your employees?" she said. "I personally do not believe so."

Guadagno's remarks were received differently by those who are business owners and those who are employees.

“She really, really hit on a lot of good topics,” said Joe Ocello, the NJGCA vice president and owner of four service stations in Ocean and Cape May counties. “Fifteen dollar-an-hour minimum wage, if it does go that route, we’re going to be forced to go self-service because we can’t afford to keep doing what we’re doing.”

But Iskender Gulyuz, the manager of a Shell gas station in Somerset County, said it took him 10 years on the job to work his way up from making minimum wage to more than \$15 an hour.

“The minimum wage is not fair,” he said. Those working at that rate — and there are many who have families, as opposed to students or senior citizens — need to work far more than 40 hours a week to make a living, he said.

Phil Murphy, a former U.S. Ambassador to Germany and the early frontrunner to secure the Democratic nomination for governor, has said he supports raising the minimum wage.

Another Democrat who has announced his candidacy, Assemblyman John Wisniewski of Middlesex County, is advocating for the increase and has voted in favor of legislation to raise the minimum wage in the past.

Guadagno’s opposition to the gas tax increase, a deal Christie negotiated with Democratic lawmakers to fund transportation projects, was one of only a few times she broke publicly from him on policy.