



# It's time for self-serve gas in NJ

By Jeff Deminski  
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Hey, 1949 called, they want their dumb law back. Defenders of the status quo and excuse makers will attack me for this. It is way beyond time we repeal the ban on self-serve gas in New Jersey. Known as the Retail Gasoline Dispensing Safety Act it was really a measure bought and paid for by the Gasoline Retailers Association because using threats of physical violence against the NJ pioneer of self-serve, Irving Reingold, wasn't working. He was able to undercut the competition by opening a self-serve station and people flocked to him. The other gas stations went into protectionist mode instead of seeing the light and the rest is history. Interesting to note that the same Gasoline Retailers Association is now represented by Sal Risalvato who wholeheartedly endorses the idea of self-serve gas.

All these years later and the rest of the country (even some parts of Oregon now) are allowing self-serve gas with no safety problems. Self-serve has not equated self-immolation. The next excuse that's made is always "prices will go up." No, take away the gas tax portion you're paying for a level playing field and self-serve gas in neighboring states is cheaper. Economists believe it could drop the price by at least 5 cents per gallon.

Then it's the "don't want my hands smelling like gas all day" folks and the "it's one of the few luxuries we have in this state" people. I don't find wasting more time than necessary at the hands of a gas attendant who often won't even say a word to me throughout the entire transaction nor get off his overseas phone call to be any type of luxury.

Now we have an assault making news because someone wanted to pump their own gas and an attendant came running over to stop him. They got into an argument over it, and a passenger got out and punched the attendant in the face. It happened at a 7-Eleven in Evesham, NJ.

Enough already. We use self-serve scanners at grocery stores, self-serve postal machines, self-serve ordering kiosks at QuickChek, self-serve car washes, damn near self-serve everything. We stupidly cling to this outdated law, unfair to begin with, and pat ourselves on the backs for it like we're the ones getting away with something.