

THE PRESS OF ATLANTIC CITY

Full-service gas stations

Luxury or convenience; self-service vs. full-service gas

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January 11, 2018



'It's a job for people,' John Jones, 56, of Egg Harbor Township, says of full-service pumps. 'If you take it away, what are they going to do? Lose people's jobs. We don't need higher unemployment.' As of Jan. 1, New Jersey is the only state with no self-service pumps.

The Garden State has a culture all its own, and it now includes being the only state that bars motorists from pumping their own gas.

As of Jan. 1, gas stations in Oregon counties with populations of less than 40,000 may permit self-service gas stations, making New Jersey the only state left that restricts all self-service gasoline.

New Jersey always has been a full-service state, said Sal Risalvato, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline-Convenience-Automotive Association, in a phone interview.

Stations face a \$250 fine if a customer pumps the gas, he said.

“The marketplace has changed,” he said. “It would be more of a benefit to the motorist and the retailers to allow people to pump their own gas.”

Should New Jersey pass legislation allowing self-service at gas stations, Risalvato said, he thinks the reaction would be good, as long as there’s an option for full-service pumps.

“That is what exactly gets people in New Jersey riled up,” he said. “They don’t want to be in a no-choice situation.”

He said, in his opinion, 40 percent to 50 percent of residents want the choice to be able to pump their gas.

It was easy to find people who disagree, though.

Christina Simuel, 33, of Cape May, doesn’t even pump her own gas when she leaves the state.

“Anytime that I go outside of New Jersey, I will definitely ask any man I see if he will pump my gas for me,” she said.

Asked how she would feel if the state made her pump her own gas, she said she would be upset and disappointed.

“I feel like with all the taxes that we pay, keep it the way it is,” she said.

Risalvato said motorists might reap benefits like cheaper gas and shorter wait times with the option for self-service.

“People want convenience,” he argued. “People want the speed with which you can complete a gas transaction and be gone before an attendant even gets to your car in most instances.”

John Jones, 56, of Egg Harbor Township, said the full-service system keeps people working.

“It’s a job for people,” he said. “If you take it away, what are they going to do? Lose people’s jobs. We don’t need higher unemployment.”

The counterpoint, Risalvato argued, was motorists could see fewer orange cones, not fewer workers.

“If we were permitted to let people pump their own gas, we’d be able to fill positions inside the store with employees outside the store,” he said.

Janae Jerkins, 19, of Pleasantville, feels full-service gas is a luxury.

“But when it’s cold and (attendants are) out here all day, I feel like it would be nicer to do it yourself,” she said. “Not doing it makes me feel kind of bad sometimes.”

The luxury of waiting inside the car while an attendant pumps the gas seems to be ingrained in the New Jersey culture.

Claudine Dodd, 44, of Egg Harbor Township, pumps her gas when she leaves the state, but she said she likes having an attendant pump her gas when it’s cold, raining or snowing, and she doesn’t have to leave her car.

“I would pay extra to not pump my own gas,” Dodd said. “Jersey girls don’t pump gas!”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.