



**New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association (NJGCA)**

*(Formerly New Jersey Gasoline Retailers Association)*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Taxing Plastic Bags Aint the Answer**

As if Small Businesses don't already have enough regulations and taxes to worry about, a few politicians in Trenton are proposing the Carryout Bag Reduction and Recycling Act (S812); legislation that would require retailers that give their customers plastic bags to charge them 5 cents per bag. To the Small Businesses that I represent this bill is a tax and a burden that can't be afforded.

This is a proposition that is inconvenient for businesses and for consumers. That's a particularly bad thing for *convenience* stores. People often make unplanned stops at convenience stores to pick up a few items and then quickly be on their way. Who has a canvas bag waiting in their car? Tracking every single disposable bag at the register will slow transactions and further undermine the convenience aspect.

Record keeping will be more burdensome. Store clerks will have to track how many bags they have dispensed and then charge customers for each. There are approximately 400 million plastic bags used in the state of New Jersey every year. That's a lot of tracking and accounting, and a lot of taxing.

And how do they plan to enforce this? This bill is modeled after a new program in Washington DC. There, they have a "secret shopper" program that checks to see if stores are complying. If the whole point of this new tax is to raise money for the environment, then how much is going to be left after paying all of the secret shoppers? Are business owners expected to tax themselves if they grab a bag and use it for the garbage can, or if a clerk rips one accidentally and has to throw it away?

I strongly believe in the importance recycling. Auto repair shops were some of the first to start widespread recycling by recycling used motor oil. That mentality is still alive today, even as many gas stations close their repair bays and add convenience stores. I encourage my members to encourage their customers to recycle by installing collection bins at their stores.

On a personal level, I am a lunatic when it comes to recycling, as my family will confirm. I hate to see anything wasted or not re-used, and it frustrates me that we don't recycle more than we already do. I have a great respect for the Earth and the resources we take from it, including the fossil fuels that form the backbone of the businesses I represent. I believe it is long past time that society begins moving toward renewable energies like biofuels and hydrogen.

In addition to being a recycling advocate, the Barnegat Bay has been a part of my life for 38 years, and my family has owned a waterfront home there since 1990. I have witnessed firsthand the decline of the bay in the last decade, and I would love nothing more than to restore it to how I first experienced it back in 1974. But I oppose this bill because it just won't solve the problem. It will only tax and burden Small Businesses. The bags themselves aren't doing the damage; it's the wasteful people who are thoughtless and toss their trash on the street. Penalize those that litter, not those that employ them.

I'm all for a solution, especially restoring Barnegat Bay. But let's have a real solution not a feel good solution that burdens thousands of retailers who are still dazed from Hurricane Sandy and a bad economy.

*Sal Risalvato is a former small business owner who resides in Barnegat and is currently the Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline-Convenience-Automotive Association (NJGCA), a state-wide trade association representing 1,500 small businesses.*

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