



# Murphy Not Ready to Let You Pump Your Own Gas, Despite Coronavirus Concerns

**By: Larry Higgs, April 18, 2020**

You know things are bad when New Jerseyans are seriously considering whether it's time we temporarily pumped our own gas.

The association that represent the Garden State's gas stations and convenience stores says the state's long-standing ban on self-serve gas needs to be temporarily lifted to protect employees and customers from exposure to the coronavirus.

**“An executive order could suspend it until he says we don't need it, but do something,” said Sal Risalvato, New Jersey Gasoline-C-Store-Automotive Association executive director. “You can't close parks and stop collecting cash tolls and not do this. Where is the logic in that?”**

Oregon, the only other state besides New Jersey with limited self-serve, temporarily allowed drivers to pump their own gas in late March due to a shortage of workers. That ban has been extended to April 25.

Gov. Phil Murphy has said in recent weeks he doesn't plan to lift the ban in New Jersey. And he apparently hasn't changed his mind.

“Nothing new to report on self-service gas, because I've got nothing new on it” Murphy said at his Friday press briefing, reiterating his March 30 comments that lifting the ban was "not a consideration, at least at this time," during a Facebook Live interview with NJ Advance Media.

**That isn't stopping gas station owners from sending emails and letters to Murphy, telling him that gas station customers and attendants can't social distance "unless they have six-foot arms," Risalvato said.**

He first emailed Murphy on March 15, asking for temporary suspension of the ban and has reiterated it with letters as recently as April 6, where he listed six gas station workers and one owner who tested positive for COVID-19.

"It's been crickets since March 15," he said. Since then, he's lost count of how many others have tested positive, other stations have closed because employees have quit.

**"I've been out five times to the supermarket and felt safe, I can sanitize my shopping cart and there was a plexiglass shield. You can't do that at a gas pump," he said. "I went to get gas, handed the guy my credit card, sat there and I'm thinking, this guy is serving hundreds of people. Who knows?"**

Due to the uncertainty, some gas stations are losing employees, some customers ask to if they can pump their own gas and in one case, a cash customer refused to take their change, he said.

If a customer pumps their own gas, the gas station owner is fined under state law, which can range from \$50 to \$250.

**How would it work? Gas stations could offer a self-service island and provide sanitizer, like a supermarket, Risalvato said. A full service set of pumps would be available for seniors or other customers who can't pump their own gas, he said.**

**"I can sanitize whatever I need to touch," he said. "That is safe compared to this."**

New Jersey, a state of 9 million residents, has now seen at least 78,467 confirmed cases and 3,840 deaths of COVID-19. Only New York has more cases and deaths among U.S. states.

*NJ Advance Media staff writer Brent Johnson contributed to this report.*