



Time for New Jersey to Allow Us to Pump Our Own Gas (Opinion)

By: Steve Trevelise, April 20, 2020

Enough of this. New Jersey is the only state left where we're not allowed to pump our own gas, and now it's putting its residents at risk for getting the coronavirus.

Think of the station attendant who can't maintain social distance while taking your order. What about when they handle your possible virus-filled money or credit card? Many employees are quitting en masse, according to WCBS 2 The simple solution here is to give us the option to pump our own gas, at least while we're in a government shutdown.

In an age where we can self-serve everything else in New Jersey from fast food to department stores, it's not fair that gas station owners are not permitted to allow their customers the same convenience. Now, it's also dangerous.

Sal Risalvato, the executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience store, and Automotive Association, told me in an email that he's asking Gov. Phil Murphy to suspend the self-serve laws for three reasons:

"To better safeguard our employees as they are on the front line with no way to maintain the required 6 foot social distance, exactly as the governor did when he stopped collecting tolls on the Parkway and Turnpike."

"To better safeguard motorists who also don't have 6-foot arms and are compromised every time they buy gas. If they CHOOSE to pump their own they can sanitize the nozzle just as customers sanitize the grocery cart when they shop for groceries, and they can insert their credit card also the same as shopping for groceries, and they do not need to have any contact with gas attendants maintain the effort to 'stop the spread.'"

"To allow stations to stay open when they do not have employees, as employees feel unsafe and are unwilling to work. Members may be closed for various hours all during the day as often they simply do not have someone to work the pumps. One member was closed for 3 weeks and finally re-opened on Wednesday and

doesn't know for how long. He may be closed again tomorrow without any employees. Members have reported that 4 and 5 employees at a time are leaving together until this crisis is over."

"The situation is so fluid and changing every day. A station that was closed yesterday may be open today for a few hours. Everything the governor has acted upon and said is the exact opposite of his refusal to suspend the self-serve law as I have requested. My frustration is that after the initial pleasantries that showed some concern, I have not received any response."

Since gas stations are essential in this time of crisis, having them closed because they can't find an attendant to work isn't fair to anyone, not the owner, the attendant, nor the person who needs to buy gas. Governor Murphy needs to understand that no one including those in the service station business should be put at risk as we deal with this coronavirus crisis. How pathetic would it be if some poor soul caught the virus because someone else didn't want to pump their own gas!