



New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association (NJGCA)
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 15, 2020

Reasonable and Fair Edition V

Governor Signs Workers Comp Legislation That Will Harm New Jersey Small Businesses

On Monday, Governor Murphy signed legislation which presumes that if an employee at an essential business gets sick with COVID-19, they are assumed to have been infected at work and therefore are eligible for workers compensation benefits. This legislation will most certainly harm essential small businesses across New Jersey that have been taking every and all precautions to limit the spread of the COVID virus.

Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association (**NJGCA**), released the following statement in response to legislation that was sent to the governor's desk:

“Governor Murphy signing this legislation simply makes no sense. It doesn't match up in any capacity with any of the advice he has given during the entire COVID crisis. This signature automatically places blame on employers whose employees get the COVID virus and may have been participating in high-risk activities, ignoring social distancing, not wearing masks, and not obeying the other precautions the governor has insisted we follow. We have all seen the news reports of crowds on the beach and backyard BBQs. What happens when this reckless behavior results in contracting COVID-19? According to Governor Murphy, the employer is to blame.”

“The Small Business community offered a compromise That **SCREAMS** Fair and Reasonable for both employers and essential employees. Governor Murphy made our case with his own words, but apparently he still couldn't recognize Fair and Reasonable.”

“I have tried to avoid the politics in this issue, however it is overwhelmingly clear: the governor is pandering to organized labor. The important thing to remember is that employers care about their employees. The governor has just put small employers on the hook for employee actions outside of work hours. We have tried to be supportive but we need to reconcile the advice the governor gives his constituents with the orders and actions that he has signed.”

“Gas stations, auto repair shops, and convenience stores are certainly agreeable to accepting a presumption of culpability as their responsibility when it is appropriate. However, to place the blame of an outbreak on these essential small businesses rather than those who act irresponsibly and place culpability on employers is absurd.”

“I emphasize that NJGCA members who operate gas stations, auto repair shops, and convenience stores in New Jersey answered the call of duty at great risk from the beginning of this crisis. It is not fair or reasonable to pass a law that automatically assumes blame and responsibility on them when an employee may have contracted this crazy virus outside of the workplace.”

NJGCA partnered with other Small Business Associations to form a coalition that has asked Governor Murphy to conditionally veto the legislation that was sent to his desk. The coalition offered to accept automatic presumption of culpability during the period of time when it was much less likely that an essential employee contracted COVID-19 outside of the workplace, even though it was still possible for that to have happened. Clearly, the governor chose to ignore this reasonable request and place the burden on small businesses.

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