

NEW JERSEY 101.5

If Gas Goes Up Again, and It Will, We Need To Pump Our Own (Opinion)

By: Steve Trelise, December 14, 2020

It's beginning to look a lot like gas prices will be going up, everywhere you go in New Jersey.

Gov. Phil Murphy, who never met a tax he didn't like, has to decide along with other governors in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic whether to sign on for a new regional cap-and-trade program aimed at reducing transportation pollution in part by taxing it. Politicians believe they can tax their way out of all problems. After all, it's not their money we're talking about, it's yours.

If only we could tax our way out of this friggin' pandemic that is robbing business owners out of the money they will need to pay this new tax.

As our own Michael Symons explained in his news story about this:

"Murphy is getting pressured from groups that are often allies but now find themselves on opposite sides of whether to join the Transportation and Climate Initiative, which is similar to what's done with energy producers and would result in an additional gas tax of perhaps 17 cents a gallon."

Oh, but won't you feel good about helping the environment as your paying more at the pump. They actually say you'll breathe easier.

What would make me breathe easier is to be able to pump my own gas. According to Sal Risalvato, who's the executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline and Convenience Automotive Association, not only could we save money, but wouldn't even need a gas tax.

"At the pump, gas today, based on the cost of labor, would be about 15 cents (a gallon less)," Risalvato said on my show back in October. "And I say in some instances 20 cents a gallon less. So if you went to a self-serve pump, you'd be saving 15 or 20 cents a gallon."

Whenever the possibility of pumping our own gas comes up, we're usually hit with two opposing factors. What about those gasoline attendants who will lose their jobs? And Jersey girls don't pump their own gas!

As far as what happens to the attendants, Risalvato says it's hard for station owners in this time of COVID-19 to find people who want to work. Since there is such demand in New Jersey, the only state left where people can't pump their own gas, legislators could mandate that at least one attendant be on duty while customers have the option of pumping their own at pumps now blocked by orange cones.

By the way, why is it that no one has a problem with the big box stores going to self-serve registers but gas station owners are not allowed the same option?

Will we ever be able to pump our own gas in New Jersey? Senate President Steve Sweeney once said not as long as he has any say in the matter. That was five years ago. Once upon a time we never thought we'd have legalized recreational marijuana in New Jersey, Now we do.

So as they say, "Hey you never know."