



# Buy Gas From Costco In NJ? They're About to Make a Major Change

By: Dan Alexander, June 7th, 2022

As the average price of gas climbs over \$5 per gallon, many New Jersey drivers have found relief in lower prices at wholesale retailers.

That could be about to change.

Signs posted at three Costco stores in Brick, Marlboro and North Brunswick have the message that store membership will be required for the purchase of gasoline starting July 5.

For decades, Costco — a member's only wholesale store — had allowed anyone from the public to buy their gas at the same price as members.

That policy has been in place since 2004, when state officials prevented Costco from excluding non-members.

But industry and state officials contacted by New Jersey 101.5 on Tuesday were unable to point to any law on the books that prevented a retailer from requiring a membership to pump gas.

A manager at the Costco in North Brunswick declined to comment and referred questions to the company's headquarters. Costco on Tuesday morning did not respond to New Jersey 101.5's requests for more information.

The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs told New Jersey 101.5 it is aware of the signs but did not immediately have a response for questions about existing regulations.

## **LONG LINES LED TO COMPLAINTS**

Across the country, big-box chains Costco, Sam's Club and BJ's Wholesale Club restrict the purchase of gasoline to members only.

In 2004 when Costco implemented the same requirement at its then-new Clifton and Ocean Township (Monmouth) locations, the company was told said it violated state law, according to news coverage at the time.

Existing law states that prices must be posted and retailers cannot sell gas at prices discounted from the posted price. But the regulation says nothing about requiring a membership.

**Sal Risavado, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, and Automotive Association, suspects the reason for the change is the long lines at Costco. He thinks members complained about having to wait in lines for up to 45 minutes along with customers who are not paying for a membership.**

Costco memberships cost \$60-\$120 a year.

Seventeen of Costco's New Jersey 20 locations have gas stations.

According to the gas price website Gas Buddy, regular was \$4.77 per gallon for regular at the North Brunswick location on Route 1. By comparison, it was \$4.93 at the nearby Raceway and Valero and \$4.95 at Speedway.