

New Jersey Hits Brakes on Pump-Your-Own Gas

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Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — New Jersey drivers won't have to pump their own gas any time soon.

Senate President Steve Sweeney said on Tuesday that recently introduced measures to roll back the law requiring gas station attendants to pump gas will not pass as long as he's in charge.

"There's nothing wrong right now with our system," Sweeney said. "There's not a problem."

Republican Assemblyman Declan O'Scanlon and Sen. Gerald Cardinale, as well as Democratic state Sen. Paul Sarlo, want to end the prohibition that dates to the 1949 law. O'Scanlon said his legislation calls for a three-year

Gas station operators said self-service would allow them to stay open overnight and could result in fewer closed pumps due to lack of manpower.

period where merchants can offer self-service gas but must also provide full service. He called the current law unnecessary.

"I've always known the Senate president was opposed to it and my thoughts on it weren't to have it move, it's to stir debate, and it worked," Sarlo said.

Some defenders of the 1949 Retail Gasoline Dispensing Safety Act specifically cite potential hazards. Meanwhile, critics point out that 48 other states operate without much trouble. Sweeney said it's a matter of convenience, not safety.



Attendant James Lewis pumps gas at a station in Portland, Ore., Wednesday, May 6, 2015. Oregon is one of just two states where motorists aren't allowed to pump their own gas. The other is New Jersey. Now the Oregon Legislature appears ready to at least let people driving through rural Oregon pump their own.

When it's snowing, how many people are clamoring to pump their own gas, Sweeney asked.

The trade group representing gas stations, which had opposed self-service previously, now supports the idea.

Sal Risalvato, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience Store, Automotive Association, said that 30 years ago, big oil companies owned and operated many retail stations and had a financial advantage over smaller operators, making it easier for them to transition to self-service and resulting in the group's opposition.

That's changed now, Risalvato added. Gas station operators said self-service would allow them to stay open

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