

Submitter: Barry OMahony
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB4151

Submitter: Barry O'Mahony
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB4151
February 8, 2022

My name is Barry O'Mahony and I live in Deschutes County, and am writing in support of passage of House Bill 4151.

Perhaps some people in populous areas of the State are not aware of it, but for the past several years, Oregonians in 18 counties have had the choice of either dispensing fuel themselves, or having it done for them. In essence, it's been a "trial" of sorts to see if the restrictions the State imposed 71 years ago on retail gas stations could be updated and made more flexible.

It's clear at this point that the results of this trial have been spectacularly successful. When I travel to nearby cities like Prineville, Madras, or Burns not a single customer has any problem having gasoline dispensed according to their preferences. Some people seem prefer to spend their time waiting for an attendant to dispense the fuel for them. Others like myself prefer the speed, convenience and security of performing this task ourselves, and quickly getting back on the road. Either way, the price is exactly the same for all customers.

I do not like handing my credit/debit card to a stranger, and have experienced credit card fraud on occasion after doing so at gas stations. Some of us have classic cars with restored, fragile paint jobs and have experienced damage from careless attendants. There's no reason why those of us in Deschutes and other populous counties shouldn't have the same choice that other Oregonians do. The current regulations even discriminate based on vehicle type, as motorcycle riders are permitted to fuel their vehicles statewide.

Some pundits in the national media have said that Oregon should remove all restrictions and let market forces decide how gasoline is dispensed in retail stations. I do not agree with this view and believe that those who which to be waited on at gas stations should always have this option. I don't think I should be so arrogant as to impose my personal preferences on those customers. Conversely, I don't understand how they believe they have the right to impose their preferences on myself and others.

I understand this ban came into effect as an anti-competitive move in an attempt to lock out new competitors. Oregon is now a far more populous State with a much larger gasoline market, and this motivation has disappeared. Some have claimed that this functions as a measure to generate jobs. I'm sure Oregon can come up with a better jobs program than by artificially creating demand for one specific job category. That's as nonsensical as banning the retail sale of motor oil in order to create more jobs at Jiffy Lube, or banning homeowners from mowing their own lawns in order to create more landscaping jobs. In any case, jobs will not be lost under HB4151 as stations will still be required to hire attendants (just as they do today in the 18 counties where choice is currently allowed).

In summary, I urge the Legislature to pass HB4151. At the very minimum, allow the counties of Deschutes, Klamath, and Umatilla to join the other counties east of the Cascades in permitting the choice of either self- or full-serve.