

17 February 2023

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Oregon State Legislature

Dear Committee:

I write as a Oregonian, small business leader, physician, and proud owner of at least a modicum of common sense and reason to urge you to pass HB 2426.

Like many Oregonians who have ever lived, worked, or spent time in any other state or country, I have long seen tremendous folly in the pretense that Oregonians are not smart enough to safely pump their own gasoline. But I have recognized that once in place (1951), this practice has tremendous inertia to remove, since any legislator would have to deal with strawman arguments about safety and jobs.

I suggest to you that now is our moment! Not only are the consequences of our folly greater now that we have tremendous labor shortages that make delays waiting for an attendant vastly longer, the impact of getting rid of these unnecessary and artificially created jobs has gone away. Unemployment has rarely been lower, there are plenty of comparable jobs. No one will suffer for lack of a gas attendant job. We can finally make a common sense move to end this silly practice and improve the lives of all Oregonians.

Repeal this tax! It is, above all, an unnecessary Time Tax on all Oregonians who drive cars.

1.) This is not about safety.

48 states and every other country on Earth besides South Africa permit self-service fueling. If there was a safety concern in 1951 (only in Oregon and New Jersey, not anywhere else?), the past 72 years of improved technology (automatic shut-off, vapor collection barriers, etc) and 72 years of greater familiarity with how to operate a gas pump have made this moot.

2.) Moreover, if it was about safety, why should the legislature have a double standard for urban Oregonians and rural Oregonians?

As you know, low-population counties have had self-service gas at night since 2015 and all day since 2017. I am sure no legislator thinks rural Oregonians matter less.

3.) Full-service would still exist at the same price, eliminating any real concerns about disability rights.

- 3.) Oregonians would not pay for this if given a fair choice. In a counterfactual scenario where mandatory full-service didn't exist, there would be no support for a proposal to introduce it and a hidden gas tax (in labor costs) to pay for it.
- 4.) The pandemic and related labor shortages have dramatically highlighted how wasteful this practice is. Many of you will have had the experiences I have, in which gas stations run only one lane – not for lack of gasoline, but for lack of attendants! 6 lanes available, but only 1 functioning, and very long lines. On some occasions, there are no attendants at all and the station closes during normal business hours.

Make no mistake, mandatory full-service is in fact a second kind of tax! It is a tax on the most precious resource every Oregonian has, even more precious than money – our time.

It routinely takes me 20-30 minutes to get gas, sometimes as long as 40. When I get gas in Vancouver, I pump my own gas and am in and out in under 10 minutes every time. Repeat that wastefulness every week forever.

- 5.) On many occasions, I have wanted to get gas at odd hours (e.g. 5am) but no one is open because they don't want to pay an attendant.
- 6.) Long gas lines produce unnecessary idling, which contributes to air pollution and climate change.

It is time for Oregon to get rid of the arbitrary bottlenecking of the process of fueling our cars, taxing gasoline to pay for unneeded jobs, and taxing the time of every Oregonian. Oregonians are not stupid, they can handle it.

This is a quality of life issue: this small but tangible change would make the lives of all Oregonians better.

Thank you for your service.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Maxwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bryan G. Maxwell, MD, MPH
Portland, OR