

Fighting to Keep Gas Prices Low

By Assemblyman Jim
Patterson

Assembly Member Jim Patterson represents the 23rd District, which includes portions of Fresno and Tulare counties.

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Who hasn't driven away from the neighborhood gas station lately with a smile on their face? We are all experiencing a sensation felt by drivers in states like Texas and Nevada for years, low gas prices. If gas prices remain low this year, Moody's Analytics says it could put \$100 billion cash in people's pockets nationwide. But let's talk about the thing that runs through our mind when we drive away from the station smiling: These prices won't last forever. Let's call it "gas price insecurity."

Yes, it feels good to pay \$2.45 a gallon to fill our thirsty gas tanks, but industry experts and our own gut feelings are telling us this honeymoon won't last forever. One Shell oil executive is predicting the cost of a barrel will hit the \$100 a barrel mark late this year or in early 2016. Other experts say prices will start going back up in a few weeks when gas prices catch up with the drop in crude oil prices. Add to that the upcoming switch to California's famous "summer blend" and we're back to a steady increase in gas prices.

Everyone knows that global issues driving down the cost of oil are not permanent. While we are all enjoying the current boon, many of us across the state are preparing to fight to keep California's gas prices low with Assembly Bill 23. I introduced this bill to exempt transportation fuels from inclusion in the state's cap-and-trade program. This will ultimately save consumers from a 15-76 cent hike in gas prices when distributors inevitably begin passing on the cap-and-trade costs to consumers.

AB 23 is finding energetic support from dozens of state legislators, chambers of commerce, tax payer advocacy groups, law enforcement associations, farming advocacy associations and hundreds of concerned citizens throughout the state.

Gas prices, high or low, have an undeniable and tangible impact on everyone. The gas tax will hurt small business owners, law enforcement, school districts, and every other entity you can think of that uses gasoline. The transportation department at Clovis Unified School District is now bracing for the \$100,000 a year it will have to come up with to pay for more expensive fuels. District officials say those funds could be used to buy 8,000 new textbooks or 750 computers over six years. A panel of respected researchers from U.C. Berkeley, U.C. Davis and Stanford say this tax could result in a potential loss of more than 18,000 jobs and \$3 billion in economic output next year alone.

The price of gas has real impacts on people's lives and those impacts shouldn't be ignored by those promoting money-grabbing schemes under the guise of helping our environment.

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