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SENATOR ROSEMARY BROWN

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What's Fueling the Price at the Pump?

By Senator Rosemary Brown

We are all feeling the impact of high gasoline prices at the pump. Understanding what determines those prices requires a closer look at the role of government policies and market conditions. I frequently hear from residents who are frustrated by the cost of filling up their vehicles, so I wanted to provide an explanation of the factors that influence gasoline prices.

Gasoline is a product which is produced from crude oil, that is transported to refineries where it undergoes a series of processes to create petroleum products, including gasoline. As you can imagine, the price of crude oil plays a significant role in determining what we ultimately pay at the pump. In fact, crude oil accounts for nearly 50 percent of the retail price of gasoline.

Crude oil prices are largely determined by supply and demand. When demand exceeds available supply, prices generally rise. Several factors can influence this balance, including global political conflicts, disruptions to major shipping routes, production restrictions and increased demand during periods of economic growth. Because oil is traded in a global market, events happening thousands of miles away can directly impact what we pay at the pump here in Pennsylvania.

Federal and state taxes typically account for approximately 12% to 17% of the final price. The federal gasoline tax is 18.4 cents per gallon, while Pennsylvania's gasoline tax is approximately 74 cents per gallon, the third highest in the nation.

As your state senator, I support policies that reduce Pennsylvania's gasoline tax and increase the supply of oil to help lower costs for consumers. During my time in the House of Representatives, I voted against Act 89 of 2013, which increased Pennsylvania's gasoline tax. I also voted in favor of Senate Bill 35, which would have prevented the automatic gas tax increase that took effect in 2023. Unfortunately, despite passing the Senate, the legislation was never considered by the House of Representatives and was not enacted into law.

As you can see, gasoline prices are influenced by a combination of government policies and market factors. I will continue supporting policies that increase supply, reduce the tax burden on Pennsylvania residents and help make filling up at the pump more affordable.



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