

Could 'Brand-less' Gas Save Rochester Drivers \$\$?

Reported by: Meghan Backus - Thursday, Sep 25, 2008 @03:00pm EST - Imagine pulling into a gas station and having options like you do in a grocery store. You could pick the generic product or the brand-name product. A bill awaiting approval by Governor Paterson would allow gas station owners in New York State to sell unbranded gas which costs less.

Drivers have two options when they fill up at the Mobil station at Twelve Corners in Brighton: ExxonMobil gasoline or E-85 fuel.

If Governor David Paterson signs off on a new bill, there could be a third choice.

"This bill would allow the owner of those stations to sell an unbranded gasoline," said Assemblyman David Koon, who co-sponsored the bill.

Unbranded gasoline is already found at wholesale clubs. It can cost up to 20 cents less a gallon than a brand name fuel.

On Thursday, the price a gas station owner would have paid for unbranded gas is \$2.71 a gallon before taxes. The cost of the Exxon Mobil brand of gas would be \$2.80 for an owner, according to the New York State Service Stations and Repair Shops.

Gas station owner Mike Davis says the Open Supply Bill would allow him to compete on another level.

"It'll help put Exxon Mobil in check," Davis said. "They're going to start losing a lot more business at their own stations and that will help lower their rack prices to us."

Gas station owners would have to clearly mark the pumps as selling unbranded fuel, but it could essentially sit right next to a pump selling branded gasoline.

"What the law's going to provide me to do is take one of our dispensers, take the Exxon Mobil trademark markings off of it and actually put a separate tank in and sell unbranded fuel out of that dispenser," Davis said.

Adding unbranded gasoline sounds simple, less expensive and convenient. But there is a catch for consumers.

"What the unbranded fuel doesn't have - it doesn't have the detergents and the additives," Davis said, "all the stuff that helps clean your engine, gives you better fuel economy."

If the governor signs off on the bill, New Yorkers will be among the first in the country to have the unbranded option at brand-name gas stations.

"It would be excellent, it would be great, it would save us money," said Jessica Alescio of Penfield.

"It's nice if they can do it," said Rowland Billy of Rochester. "I'd love to see it and I probably support that dealer."

A Representative from the governor's office says the governor plans to make an announcement on the bill Friday.

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