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Windsor's Gas Station Ban Faces Scrutiny as Town Considers Special Exemption for Big-Box Retailers

CFCA urges officials to repeal the ban rather than favor big-box retailers over local businesses

Sacramento, CA – Today, the California Fuels & Convenience Alliance (CFCA) [submitted formal comments to the Windsor Town Council](#) urging officials to repeal the Town's gas station ban and reject proposals that would grant special exemptions to big-box retailers while continuing to deny local entrepreneurs and small business owners the same opportunities.

Windsor adopted its gas station ban in 2022. Now, as the Town faces declining tax revenue [amidst a \\$19 million budget deficit](#), retail leakage, and economic development challenges, officials are considering revisions to the ordinance that would grant special exemptions to big-box retailers seeking to establish fuel facilities while continuing to restrict local businesses from doing the same.

According to Town data, Windsor's four existing gas stations account for nearly 8% of the Town's aggregate sales tax revenue. The Town's current discussion underscores a broader reality that policymakers across California should consider: fuel retailers are significant contributors to local economies, public services, jobs, and small business ownership opportunities. By prohibiting new fuel retail development, Windsor has effectively placed an artificial cap on a meaningful source of tax revenue and economic activity. At a time when the Town faces ongoing fiscal challenges, it is worth considering whether maintaining restrictions on new investment remains in the community's best interest.

The economic impact of California's fueling industry extends far beyond the pump:

THE ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT OF CALIFORNIA'S FUELING INDUSTRY

- \$15 billion contributed to California's gross state product annually
- \$5.7 billion in wages generated each year
- Nearly \$10 billion paid annually in state and local taxes

- More than 95% of fueling establishments are operated by small business owners, either branded franchisees or independent operators
- 10,423 fueling establishments across California, employing 66,000 workers directly and supporting 59,000 additional jobs

While governments have an important role in shaping the future of their communities, policies that restrict business investment can also carry unintended economic and social consequences. CFCA argues that Windsor's experience demonstrates the importance of carefully evaluating those tradeoffs before limiting future opportunities for businesses that generate substantial economic activity and tax revenue for their communities.

"If Windsor now recognizes the economic value that fuel retailers bring to the community, those opportunities should not be reserved for a select group of big-box retailers," said Elizabeth Graham, CEO of the California Fuels & Convenience Alliance. "The answer to Windsor's fiscal challenges is not creating special exemptions for a few businesses while continuing to exclude everyone else. The Town should restore a level playing field that allows all qualified businesses to invest, create jobs, and contribute to Windsor's future, while enabling the community to benefit from the tax revenue and community contributions that responsible fuel retail development can provide."

WHAT COMMUNITIES RISK WHEN GAS STATION BANS ARE IMPLEMENTED

- Loss of jobs, income, and small business ownership opportunities
- Reduced consumer fueling options and increased vehicle miles traveled for refueling activities
- Lost opportunities to transition existing fueling locations to electric vehicle charging and other alternative fuels
- Reduced competition and the potential for higher fuel prices during California's energy transition

While addressing budget deficits is a legitimate and important objective, CFCA's comments urge Windsor officials to repeal the gas station ban in its entirety and pursue policies that encourage investment, competition, job creation, and economic growth for all businesses, not policies that pick winners and losers based on scale.

The Windsor Town Council is expected to consider the future of the ordinance at its July 15 meeting.

To learn more about the issue and urge Windsor officials to repeal the gas station ban, visit cfca.energy/repeal-the-ban.

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About CFCA

CFCA is the industry's statewide trade association representing the needs of small and minority wholesale and retail marketers of gasoline, diesel, lubricating oils, motor fuels products, and alternative fuels, including but not limited to, hydrogen, compressed natural gas, ethanol, renewable and biodiesel, and electric charging stations; transporters of those products; and retail convenience store operators. CFCA's members serve California's families, agriculture, police and fire, cities, construction, and all consumer goods moved by the delivery and transportation industries.