Del Norte Triplicate

OPINION

Opinion: “Waiting to Celebrate”

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I just filled up my truck with diesel at the local Elk Valley casino because as most people know, it has the lowest prices in town. it’s still pretty difficult to celebrate at $4.40 per gallon. It’s $5.39 everywhere else in town. (diesel fuel at the time of this writing).

I just returned from a trip to Colorado to visit family and, of course, I paid close attention to fuel prices.

As one would imagine, fuel prices dropped lower and lower the further away from California we travelled. The following prices represent diesel fuel.

First fuel stop: Bend, Oregon at $3.95 per gallon. Already a .45 per gallon savings.

Second stop: Ontario, Oregon at $4.28 per gallon. A bit of a jump but still a .12 per gallon savings.

Third stop: Heyburn, Idaho at $4.08 per gallon. A slight drop and a .32 per gallon savings.

Fourth stop: Price, Utah at $3.69. A .71 per gallon savings.

Finally, last stop: Delta, Colorado at $3.44 per gallon. Wow! A .96 per gallon savings.

Now, one would think that with all those oil refineries right here in California, it would be easy to refine oil and ship fuel anywhere in the State very easily which in turn would keep prices down.

But refineries in California are either being shut down or voluntarily moving out of state due to heavy regulations in California.

In April of this year, Valero Energy Corporation announced that its subsidiary company Valero Refining Company-California had submitted notice to the California Energy Commission of its intent to cease refining operations at Valero's Benicia Refinery by the end of April, 2026.

This is in addition to the Phillips 66 Los Angeles refinery already scheduled to close by the end of this year.

Congressman Vince Fong stated, "Our fuel supply is in jeopardy. This is not a distant concern. This is not an academic conversation. This is happening right now." As reported by Fox26News.

Gas Buddy-dot-com's Senior Petroleum Analyst Patrick De Haan posted on X;

"It's clear that the political environment in California has been hostile to refiners, and the state badly needs to revise its mentality or face a declining number of refineries and higher prices."

According to representative Fong, at one time in the late seventies, there were somewhere between 40 to 50 refineries operating in the state of California.

Now, depending on what sources you look at, that number is down to about 7 full refineries and 5 smaller, privately owned refineries.

Before Governor Gavin Newsome signed policies such as ABX2-1 into law October 14th of 2024, tightening the state's control over the California transportation fuels market, he was sternly warned by the Arizona and Nevada governors that it would lead to fuel shortages and refinery closures.

This is in addition to the state gasoline excise tax that just went into effect July 1, 2025 increasing the cost of fuel by 1.6 cents per gallon.

The fact remains, like it or not, that oil is still a much needed commodity for California drivers. So if oil refineries are closing, where does California get its much needed oil?

California is importing oil from approximately ten foreign countries which include Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Brazil, and Ecuador. We also import oil from Alaska.

This oil is brought here via massive ocean cargo tankers. This would be fine if they operated on Tesla batteries but they certainly do not.

These huge cargo oil tankers operate on what is called heavy fuel oil (HFO) also known as "bunker" fuel.

This is the grime, the sludge that is left over at the end of the oil refining process. It is the dirtiest fuel possible to burn and it produces high amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants such as sulfur and nitrogen oxides.

So why would our so-called "leaders" elect to import oil from all of these foreign countries, requiring transport via high polluting oil tankers when California has the sixth largest oil reserves in the nation? And,

we could cleanly drill for it right here in our state. In turn, keeping costs down and creating more jobs.

It seems a bit hypocritical since we're always being lectured about "minimizing our carbon footprint." And, "Stop driving SUV's, they expel too much pollution!"

But does Gavin Newsome care about how much pollution is going into the atmosphere while we import 1.4 million barrels of oil per day?

I think any rational thinking person would give an emphatic, bipartisan "NO!"

As long as he can't see the problem from his vineyard, it doesn't affect him.

And that is the point. None of the radical leftists that have been in power in California since the late 70's are ever directly affected by the terrible policies and regulations that they impose on us.

It's always the working, small business owner, middle class, that is affected.

Thankfully, Gavin Newsome's term as governor will end in early 2027. But the question is, who will take his place?

I hope this column doesn't come across as a rant. Believe me, there are a myriad of topics I could write about in this context. Rather, this is a wake up call. I would urge all California voters to thoroughly research all candidates that will be running in the gubernatorial election that will be here before you know it.

We cannot keep electing the same people into office that continue to add more and more regulations to our lives and expect things to change for the better.

As I travel the country, I see places that are booming. People that are celebrating strong economies and job growth. States that are enjoying lower fuel prices which in turn mean lower grocery prices.

The thing is, with the right people in leadership, we could be celebrating the same victories.

But it will not happen if we stick with the status quo and elect leaders without the people's best interests and overall happiness in mind.

Please California voters, let's do our research and make changes for the better for our state, for our families and for our lives.

Until then, I will be waiting to celebrate.