

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Commerce and Tourism

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BILL: SB 1184

INTRODUCER: Senator Brandes

SUBJECT: Self-service Gasoline Stations

DATE: March 14, 2014

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Malcolm	Hrdlicka	CM	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			AG	
3.			AP	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1184 requires full-service gas stations that also offer self-service gas at a lower cost to display a blue, 15 square inch decal that displays the international symbol of accessibility, the gas station’s telephone number, and the words “Call for Assistance.” This requirement will be implemented and enforced by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

The bill also preempts local laws relating to fueling assistance for disabled individuals by self-service gas stations.

**II. Present Situation:**

According to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS), there are 8,000 retail gas stations in Florida.<sup>1</sup> People with disabilities may find it difficult or impossible to use the controls, hose, or nozzle of a self-service gas pump. As a result, at stations that offer both self and full-service, people with disabilities might have no choice but to purchase the more expensive gas from a full-service pump. At locations with only self-service pumps, people with disabilities might be unable to purchase gas at all.<sup>2</sup> State, federal, and local laws have attempted to address these problems.

**Florida Fueling Assistance Requirements**

Approximately 350 gasoline stations in Florida provide full-service as well as self-service fuel at a lower price.<sup>3</sup> Under s. 526.141(5), F.S., these stations, known as “limited full-service” stations, are required to provide refueling assistance for the self-service portion of the station to any

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<sup>1</sup> DACS, *Agency Analysis: SB 1184* (Feb. 27, 2014) (on file with the Committee on Commerce and Tourism)..

<sup>2</sup> Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section, *ADA Business Brief: Assistance at Gas Stations* (June 2002) available at <http://www.ada.gov/gasbrscr.pdf> (last visited Mar. 11, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> DACS, *Agency Analysis*.

motorist displaying an exemption parking permit or a license plate bearing the international accessibility symbol when the operator of the vehicle is the person to whom such permit was issued. Limited full-service stations must prominently display a decal up to 8 square inches in size on the front of all self-service pumps clearly stating the assistance requirements and the penalties for any violations. This section is enforced by the DACS and compliance is monitored through routine gas station inspections.<sup>4</sup> A violation of this section is a second-degree misdemeanor.<sup>5</sup> There are currently no similar state-level requirements for self-service only gas stations.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act Assistance Requirements**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires self-service gas stations to provide equal access to their customers with disabilities. Gas stations with more than one employee must provide refueling assistance upon the request of an individual with a disability without any charge beyond the self-service price. Gas stations must let patrons know (e.g., through appropriate signs) that customers with disabilities can obtain refueling assistance by either honking or otherwise signaling an employee. However, a service station or convenience store is not required to provide such service at any time that it is operating on a remote control basis with a single employee, but is encouraged to do so, if feasible.<sup>6</sup>

### **Local Government Fueling Assistance Regulations**

Local governments have begun passing regulations with respect to fueling assistance for disabled drivers. For example, in early 2012, Broward and Hillsborough counties enacted similar ordinances requiring full-service gas stations and self-service gas stations with two or more attendants on duty to provide fueling assistance to a disabled driver when requested. These gas stations are required to place a decal no smaller than 15 square inches with a blue background on the front of all gas pumps that states the telephone number of the gas station, the international symbol of accessibility, and wording such as “Call for Assistance” or “Assistance Available upon Request.” The gas station is not required to provide assistance if a second attendant is not present at the station. Consequences for violating the ordinances ranges from a \$250 civil fine up to criminal prosecution as a second-degree misdemeanor.<sup>7</sup>

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** amends s. 526.141, F.S., to require a full-service gas station offering self-service at a lesser cost to prominently display an additional decal that is blue, at least 15 square inches in size, and that clearly displays the international symbol of accessibility, the station’s telephone number, and the words “Call for Assistance.” The DACS is directed to adopt rules to implement

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<sup>4</sup> Conversation with Grace Lovett, the DACS (Mar. 13, 2014). The limited full-service assistance decals are part of the inspection decal placed on the gas pump after the DACS has inspected the pump. E-mail from Grace Lovett, the DACS (Mar. 14, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> A second-degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to 60 days in jail or by a \$500 fine. Sections 775.082(4)(b) and 775.083(1)(e), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Justice, *ADA Business Brief*.

<sup>7</sup> Hillsborough County, Fla., Code part A, ch. 10, art. XI (2012); Broward County, Fla., Code part II, ch. 20, art. III (2012); see Leon County, Fla., Code ch. 11, art. XXIV (2013).

and enforce these provisions. The bill also specifically preempts local government laws and regulations pertaining to the provision of fueling assistance by a self-service gas station.

**Section 2** provides an effective date of July 1, 2014.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Decals required by the bill will be produced by the Florida Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association and sold to gas stations at a cost of approximately \$1 per decal.<sup>8</sup> According to the Florida Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, a number of gas stations already use decals that will be required by the bill.<sup>9</sup>

Gas station owners that fail to comply with the requirements in the bill may face up to 60 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

The bill may provide increased accessibility at gas stations for disabled drivers.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The DACS is not required to make or approve the decals. However, the DACS will check the decals to ensure they comply with the statutory requirements at the same time it conducts gas station inspections.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Telephone conversation with Ned Bowman, Executive Director, Florida Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association (Mar. 12, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Conversation with Grace Lovett, the DACS (Mar. 13, 2014); E-mail from Grace Lovett, the DACS (Mar. 14, 2014).

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

As currently written, the bill applies only to limited full-service gas stations when it appears it is intended to apply to self-service gas stations.

**VII. Related Issues:**

The bill requires the DACS to adopt rules to implement and enforce the act.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

The bill substantially amends section 526.141 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.