

Opinion: Bump at the pump wasn't necessary

By Ted Gaines

California already has some of the highest gas taxes and worst roads in the country. As of Nov. 1, our gas taxes are second to none.



Ted Gaines

The largest gas tax increase in California's history took effect Wednesday. Motorists will now be paying an additional 12 cents per gallon of gasoline and 20 cents per gallon of diesel fuel as a result of Senate Bill 1, the \$5.2 billion annual transportation tax proposal passed earlier this year.

The frustrating thing is that we didn't have to take a single penny from Californians in new taxes to fix our roads. But after years of diverting billions of transportation dollars to ridiculous pet projects like the high speed rail, we're now left paying for the same service twice.

So how are the people supposed to believe that this time, the new gas tax money collected will actually be spent on transportation when 30 percent of the new funds have already been allocated to non-road projects like state parks and mass transit?

Also frustrating is the timing of the gas tax increase. It's

no coincidence that Nov. 1 is the day when California retailers begin switching from summer to the less-expensive winter gasoline. Winter blends usually run about 12 cents less per gallon than summer blend. Essentially, the switch to winter blend will be even with the gas tax increase, so Sacramento politicians are hoping consumers won't notice the bump at the pump.

This was not the only option. Republicans developed a transportation plan that would have provided funding without raising taxes. But apparently we're in a legislative contest to see how expensive we can make staple goods and how unlivable we can make this state for the poor and middle class. We aren't taxing champagne and caviar. Transportation is a basic need to live and work and raise a family.

Ted Gaines represents the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, Shasta, Sierra and Siskiyou counties.