



Written by [Salena Zito](#) on May 21, 2024

Biden Lawsuit Against Sheetz Gas Will Enrage Pennsylvania Voters

ALTOONA, Pennsylvania — The oldest gas station in America still in operation, Reighard's here in this Blair County city, got its start in 1908 when a local blacksmith decided to sell gasoline out the back of his shop when the Model T was introduced.

It has been open ever since. While architecturally it is underwhelming, the service is good because the people who work there care about the work they do, whether it is pumping gas, washing your windshield or doing minor fixes on your car. It is important to them that you return.

While Reighard's holds the title of the oldest gas station in the country, it was another Altoona family that put a different kind of gas station excellence on the map. The Sheetz family story is one of struggles. This family-friendly service station struggled with a salmonella breakout in 2004, but it retained a deeply local customer base and expanded well beyond its western Pennsylvania roots.

Ask any traveler in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and North Carolina and they'll tell you when they see the cheery red and yellow stations along their drives, Sheetz means quality and comfort to their loyal customers.

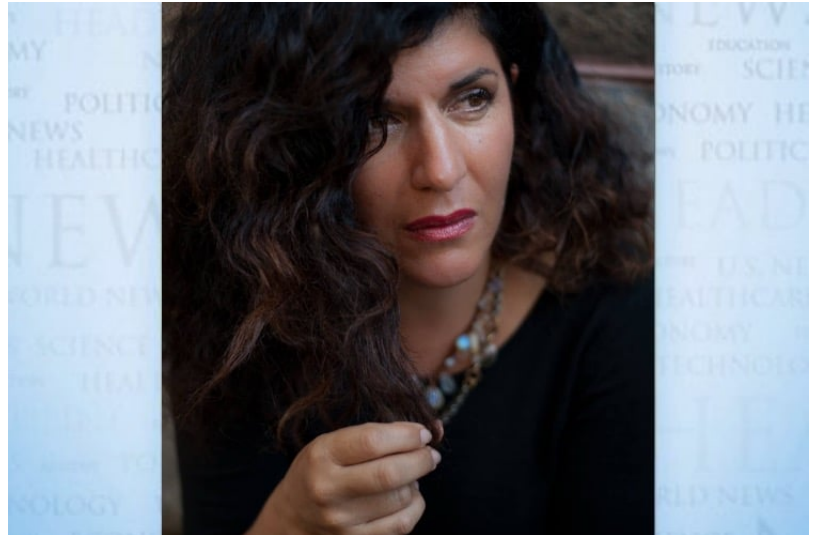
One very loyal and vocal customer is Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pa.), the Braddock Democrat who often posts on X his preference for Sheetz over Wawa, the other mega service station based in the state, with cheeky posts such as "Sheetz > Wawa."

With so much loyalty among residents in the state, it made sense for President Joe Biden to do a photo-op at a Sheetz in suburban Pittsburgh last week after his visit with local steelworkers. He wanted to demonstrate that he is no different than any other Pennsylvanian in his affection for the family-owned business.

Biden even went so far as to pick up sandwiches for construction workers after pulling the presidential motorcade into the Sheetz gas station in Moon Township. Wearing his aviator glasses, he posed for a selfie with an employee.

Then things got weird.

Just one day after the president's orchestrated Sheetz run, the Biden administration hit the privately held convenience store chain with a federal lawsuit in which federal officials say the company



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discriminated against minority job applicants. The theory, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, is that because the company uses criminal background checks to screen job seekers, somehow that's a violation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The Civil Rights Act prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion and national origin. EEOC attorney Debra M. Lawrence wrote that criminal background checks "cause a disparate impact because of race or other protected classifications."

Lawrence went on to say the employment hiring practices must be shown by the employer to be necessary to ensure the safe and efficient performance of the particular jobs at issue.

"Even when such necessity is proven, the practice remains unlawful if there is an alternative practice available that is comparably effective in achieving the employer's goals but causes less discriminatory effect," Lawrence added. The suit said Sheetz discriminated against Black, Native American and multiracial job seekers by weeding out applicants who failed a criminal background check.

Logic says EEOC's underlying assumptions are that nonwhites are criminals. That's absurd and insulting.

Sheetz employs nearly 25,000 employees in a stretch of Appalachia that cuts diagonally through Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and North Carolina. The company gives back to the community through a charitable foundation and has a tradition on the Fourth of July of honoring customers by rolling back prices on all types of fuel except diesel at all 675-plus locations. That day's fuel cost is always \$1.776 per gallon, a tribute to the founding year of 1776.

Going after Sheetz is like tugging on Superman's cape in Pennsylvania, in particular in central and western Pennsylvania when pulling up to a Sheetz is like pulling up to home. This is especially so when the alleged "violation" is what common sense says is just good business practices, such as making sure employees who interact with the public aren't criminals.

Like the Biden administration's pause of exports of American liquefied natural gas, which harms hundreds of thousands of jobs in the state, or his proposed rule for the 45V hydrogen production tax credit that would cut Pennsylvania workers out of the equation in the hydrogen industry, the Sheetz lawsuit has local Democrats shaking their heads.

As one Democrat said privately, "Is [Biden] just trying to lose Pennsylvania?"

Salena Zito is a CNN political analyst, and a staff reporter and columnist for the Washington Examiner. She reaches the Everyman and Everywoman through shoe-leather journalism, traveling from Main Street to the beltway and all places in between. To find out more about Salena and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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