

July 7, 2019

**TO: Mayor Cecily Baskir  
And  
Town Council Members  
Chevy Chase, MD**

**From: [Larry Will](#)**



Reference: <https://wjla.com/news/local/town-of-chevy-chase-may-ban-gas-powered-leaf-blowers-amid-loud-noise-pollution-concerns>

I see from the referenced article that the Climate and Environmental Committee is recommending the banning of gasoline powered leaf blowers in Chevy Chase. I am writing to point out that an outright ban of an indispensable tool to someone that needs it for his business will not be received well. Homeowners may echo that feeling when they are forced to discard their leaf blower or pay more for professional services.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I am not a stake holder in the above proposed regulation, nor am I trying to interfere with any decision you deem necessary, but I am a source of facts regarding the leaf blower and the environmental impact thereof that you should consider before you make up your mind on this issue. The information I have included in this commentary is based partly on my own personal experience of 26 years and partly on reputable sources of information to which I provide Internet links. As an expert in the field

of leaf blowers and sound reduction, I am in a unique position to supply these facts.

There are many unsubstantiated arguments, other than noise, pointing to reasons why gasoline powered leaf blowers should be banned. But you should be wary of comments and quotations based on opinion and derogatory innuendo. Some blower ban advocates have impressive titles, but most of these sources have no real understanding of the modern leaf blower's design or its uses. I think it would be a mistake to not give at least the same attention to the other side of the issue, in contrast to the condemnation of the blower.

As supplementary issues are brought up, such as perceived health hazards, exhaust emission or dust, you can find help in understanding the facts at my [website](#).

[Exhaust emission](#) was reduced by as much as 90% as of January 2005.

[Perceived health hazard](#) is an unsubstantiated statement.

[Dust](#) is insignificant if blowers are operated properly.

[Greenhouse gasses](#) from blowers are miniscule compared to other sources.

The disturbance of wild animals is a new one for me. I consider this reaching beyond reality just a bit.

Because the only real issue with the leaf blower is noise, I would like to suggest that you take a moment to review a very well stated and easy to understand pamphlet on the subject of sound and [sound measurement](#), found on my website. It was published by a highly reputable Danish manufacturer of sound measuring equipment.

Because sound magnitude is expressed in decibels, which is a logarithmic value, the actual number can be misleading. The fact is, for every six dB(A) reduction in sound magnitude, the actual volume is reduced by 50%. This is hard to accept as being true for the average person, so the best thing to do is to witness an actual sound comparison, but I know that it is not easy to arrange this. An alternative is to check out the [video](#) of an actual demonstration developed for the comparison of leaf blowers on my website. The difference between a loud blower and one that is quiet is impressive. You might be surprised to learn that battery powered leaf blowers are not as quiet as you may have been led to believe. In addition, keep in mind that cordless leaf blower performance is just not there yet for the professional.

In the case of a gasoline powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet per and industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)), of which the result is published in

literature, printed on the box and [labeled](#) on the unit. Several companies have been able to reduce sound level by as much as 75%. A “Quiet” leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per this Standard.

Fortunately, because of the industry’s foresight, any city that wants to limit the sound emanating from a leaf blower can easily determine sound magnitude in the field without testing. The consumer can also determine compliance with sound limitations at the point of purchase via the attached label. This label has been on all gasoline powered leaf blowers manufactured in the United States for at least the past ten years.

I know that thought is being given to the impact a blower ban will have on the professional user, but I suggest that they should also be included in any development of an ordinance to that end. Using alternatives to a gasoline powered leaf blower could take him [ten times longer](#) to clean up yard debris. The added cost could either put him out of business or, at the very least, increase cost to his customers.

Ultimately, banning leaf blowers will be controversial. Lawn care contractors have taken at least one city to [court](#) over a ban. I am fully aware of all restrictions being applied to leaf blowers by various cities and I can assure you that opposition to a ban will be substantial. The reason is because eliminating this tool will impact a lot of people, voters as well as professionals that want or need blowers. You may not hear many ban opposing arguments at your council meetings because these people are not as well organized as those asking for a ban, but you will surely hear from them once the ordinance is implemented.

If you have already decided to ban leaf blowers outright, have you given thought as to how this law will be enforced? No doubt it will be done by the local police. These dedicated service providers are primarily concerned with the wellbeing of the residents; on the lookout for true criminals; people that stole property or performed acts of violence or vandalism.

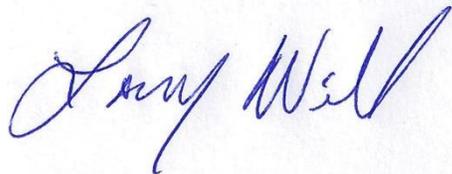
Are we asking too much of our police? To the average citizen, some rules seem unreasonable. To law abiding citizens, there is resentment to laws that are intended to benefit only a few.

Laws that are written to solve one problem should not create another. Banning gasoline powered leaf blowers can be considered an unreasonable rule by some people, but as an alternative to a ban, requiring quiet leaf blowers may not be.

Lots of cities have problems with enforcement issues; Palo Alto, Santa Monica, and Los Angeles just to mention a few. Give serious thought to ban alternatives. Explore and understand what changes and improvements have been made to the gasoline powered leaf blower. Keep in mind that the issue here is noise and how the blower is used, not the gasoline powered leaf blower per se.

If you should need information that is not clearly addressed here or on my website, please contact me and I will do whatever I can to help, at no cost to you, including further research on your behalf.

Best regards,



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