

October 26, 2021

**TO: Mayor Jorge O. Elorza  
Providence, Rhode Island  
Council President John J. Iglizzi  
and  
14 Council Members**

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



References:

<https://providencenoiseproject.org/leaf-blowers/>

Dear Mayor Elorza and Distinguished Council Members:

Please do not let the length of this letter deter you from reading it, because it will turn out to be of great value and interest to you. It deals with the leaf blower, the use of which has been put in question before you. According to the referenced Internet article, a very strong proposal to limit the use of gasoline powered leaf blowers is being made by Council Members Helen Anthony, John Goncalves and Nirva LaFortune. In short, they want to ban noisy gasoline-powered leaf blowers. Their suggestion is prompted by some of their constituents within their wards, which is admirable.

All the usual points made as reasons for banning leaf blowers are very familiar to me. I have studied each of them in detail and except for sound, I find them to be either false, misleading, outdated, or unsubstantiated.

Right up front, I want to say that I am not a stakeholder in your community's leaf blower issue, nor am I trying to interfere with any decision you deem necessary.

But I am a source of information about the design and use of cordless and gasoline-powered leaf blowers that will be enlightening to you. Why? Because I designed them, tested them, worked with regulatory agencies to certify them, and have spent more than 27 years helping cities like Providence learn the truth about them. I have contacted over [190 cities](#) in this endeavor.

I am a retired Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I would like to start by providing you with a link to a brief summary of my [qualifications and credentials](#).

I know the leaf blower has been a hot button for some people for a long time, especially in your area of the country. But most of the cities that have decided to ban leaf blowers, have done so because of two things; activist pressure and highly publicized false information. As for advocate pressure, one should be sure, that this group represents the will of most of your constituents. Your form of government is probably the best way to gauge the will of the community, with 15 active city council members.

Regarding false information, I know that if each of you take the time to review my comments, this will make your job easier. At the very least, it will give you a new prospective on the issue. Complacency or lack of interest could result in an undesirable result.

If the proposal in Providence is prepared based only on the negative claims made about the gasoline-powered leaf blower, in other words what you have heard so far, you are being misled. I know you want to do something about the leaf blower to please those that want them controlled, but you must consider the impact this will have on those that use and need them.

The direction you are asked to go at this point is reasonable to a point, but there are two major problems with the way it is written, as I understand it: sound level and allowable hours of use.

Requiring a maximum allowable sound limit as written is unenforceable. To achieve an accurate reading with a sound meter, one must consider the variables. Therefore, you should use the [sound level label](#) attached to the leaf blower as an indication of compliance. The reason is, the manufacturer follows a test Standard, where variables are controlled and consistency between tests can be achieved, regardless of manufacturer or product design. This test procedure dictates limits on the many variables that must be considered in order to determine accurate and comparable results. Some of these variables are:

- Distance to the microphone.

- Position of microphone above the ground.
- Location of the person reading the meter.
- Location of sound absorbing materials or people nearby.
- Direction and magnitude of the wind.
- Position of the operator relative to the position of the measurement device (facing or pointing away).
- Type of ground cover.
- Closeness to sound reflecting surfaces.
- Ambient sound level.

The second problem is with the allowable hours of use; 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Starting a day's work at 9:00 am reduces the number of hours per day a contractor can work, wasting morning daylight hours. Extending work hours until 6:00 pm does not compensate for that because at certain times of the year in your area, the sun goes down long before that. This seriously impacts the contractor's income and that of his employee. It amounts to a cut in pay, so to speak, at a very inopportune time, holidays and all.

According to the referenced article, a claim is made that leaf blowers are hazardous to the environment and your health. Let me address how you are being misled.

I do not want to excoriate the council members that are proposing the leaf blower ordinance. That is not my purpose, for I know they are convinced they are standing on firm ground. I agree that it is appropriate to do something about leaf blowers, because they can be irritating, and they agitate the people that are annoyed by them. But they are annoyed by the noise, not the other things being attributed to leaf blowers, things that have no basis in fact.

The initial reason for attacking leaf blowers always was, and still is for that matter, that some of them are noisy and therefore irritating. The concept of citing health hazards as the reason for doing something is contrived. It was initiated by Peter and Susan Kendall of Orinda, California. You can read all about them in the [New Yorker, October 25, 2010 issue](#). They wanted leaf blowers banned. Because sound was not a compelling enough reason for banning leaf blowers in their hometown, Ms. Kendall said, *"I would (in the future) try to get the law classified not under noise but under health and safety..."*

Many anti-leaf blower advocates have created websites that dedicate themselves to demeaning the leaf blower. So, the Kendall's and others, no doubt including some advocates in Providence, have searched the Internet for the names of dignitaries and organizations that provide statements supporting their mission, regardless of the truth. Local people that are strongly against the leaf blower are

eager to believe what they read, using these falsehoods to justify their cause. Some of the statements you hear even defy logic. I am sure you know from your experience with the media that if something is said often enough, by many different people, or put in print by many sources, regardless of the facts, people will tend to believe it as being true. They then will proceed to confidently restate these unproven hypotheses emphatically.

Here are the facts in detail, which via the indicated links will explain how you are being misled:

### **Greenhouse gas (carbon dioxide):**

*Excerpt from Professor Ian Plimer's book in a brief summary: [PLIMER](#) : "Of course, you know about this evil carbon dioxide that we are trying to suppress - it's that vital chemical compound that every plant requires to live and grow and to synthesize into oxygen for us humans and all animal life."*

*"Okay, here's the bombshell. The (recent) volcanic eruption in Iceland. Since its first spewing of volcanic ash, it has, in just FOUR DAYS, NEGATED EVERY SINGLE EFFORT you have made in the past five years to control CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on our planet - all of you.*

<https://eos.org/research-spotlights/volcano-in-iceland-is-one-of-the-largest-sources-of-volcanic-co2>

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/148510/fagradalsfjall-continues-to-erupt>

[https://www.leafblowernoise.com/#Consider\\_greenhouse\\_gasses](https://www.leafblowernoise.com/#Consider_greenhouse_gasses)

To say that leaf blowers are a serious source of greenhouse gas is an uninformed statement. Ten ounces of fuel through a leaf blower (10 minutes running time per week for a typical household) generates about the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> as that found in a [couple cases of beer](#).

### **Hydrocarbon exhaust emission:**

It is illegal for a city or town such as Westport to ban leaf blowers because of this type of exhaust emission.

[https://www.leafblowernoise.com/#Can\\_Leaf\\_Blowers\\_be\\_regulated\\_locally\\_to\\_reduce\\_emissions](https://www.leafblowernoise.com/#Can_Leaf_Blowers_be_regulated_locally_to_reduce_emissions)

Don't believe the diatribe you hear about leaf blower exhaust emission being worse than a Ford Raptor pickup truck, or any other over the road vehicle for that matter. Keep in mind the difference in engine size, [400 horsepower](#) vs. 2.5 horsepower.

<https://www.leafblownoise.com/edmonds%20test%20response2.pdf>

Since January 2005, this type of exhaust emission has been vastly reduced on leaf blowers, meeting imposed government limits.

[https://www.leafblownoise.com/#What\\_then\\_is\\_the\\_big\\_complaint](https://www.leafblownoise.com/#What_then_is_the_big_complaint)

### **Dust:**

Only PM10 and PM2.5 particulate matter is hazardous to your health, and leaf blowers are not the source of that constituent in the atmosphere.

[https://www.leafblownoise.com/#Are\\_leaf\\_blowers\\_hazardous\\_to\\_your\\_health](https://www.leafblownoise.com/#Are_leaf_blowers_hazardous_to_your_health)

Take a look at what the source of this airborne particulate matter really is.

<https://www.leafblownoise.com/Table%203%2011%20San%20Joaquin%20Valley%20PM10.doc>

Okay, now what about **noise**? Well, the industry took notice of blower noise more than 25 years ago and deliberately addressed this issue in response to complaints. Much has been done to reduce the noise from all gasoline powered leaf blowers, spending millions of dollars to make an alternative to noisy blowers available to the consumer.

In the case of a gasoline-powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet to replicate what a bystander will experience. The published values are obtained per the industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)). A "Quiet" leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per this Standard.

Now just think about what that equates to for a minute. Sixty-five dB(A) is the same sound level as that inside a [typical office environment](#). Is it silent? No! But this is at least a seventy-five percent reduction in sound. At the ear of the operator, quiet leaf blowers are only 85 dB(A) and do not require hearing protection [according to OSHA](#). Check out the [video](#) of an actual demonstration

developed for the comparison of leaf blower sound on my website. Note that battery-powered blowers are not as quiet as one might think. To understand how sound level is quantified, [click here](#).

Quiet leaf blowers have been available for a long time, however, not all leaf blowers are quiet. Now for a little technical talk. Look at it this way. Sound from today's leaf blowers can be categorized per the following:

- Sound levels from Quiet blowers 65 dB(A) or less, have been reduced by 75%.
- Blowers 71 dB(A) or less, have been reduced by at least 50%.
- Blowers at 77 dB(A) are loud.
- Blowers greater than 77 dB(A) should be considered too loud for residential use.

From this, you can see that for every 6 dB(A) reduction in sound level, the volume is reduced by 50%.

Now I know you are proposing a sound level limit of 70 dB(A), but you should consider reducing that to 65 dB(A) for an additional lowering of sound level.

I encourage you to learn more about these quiet blowers before summarily banning them along with the noisy ones. Fortunately, because of the industry's foresight, any city that wants to limit the sound emanating from a gas-powered leaf blower can easily determine sound magnitude in the field without testing. The consumer can also determine compliance with local sound limitations at the point of purchase via the attached [label](#). This decal has been on all quiet gasoline powered leaf blowers manufactured in the United States for at least the past fifteen years. If there is no label on a unit, you can assume it is loud and it does not comply.

If you are thinking that you should require battery-powered or electric units as a replacement, there is no need. If you walk through your local home supply center, it is obvious that battery power is already very popular with the homeowner. Given time for the technology to develop, the professional will also accept the design as a replacement on its own merit. In spite of what you may have heard, the available battery power today is not sufficient for the professional application, resulting in loss of time, increased cost and the potential loss of business or profit.

In the back of your mind, you may be thinking that because there are other cities that have banned blowers, you can't go too far wrong to follow their precedent. If you are seriously considering this, you should have questions:

- How will a ban be enforced?
- Will homeowners with leaf blowers be upset or angry?
- How does this impact the elderly, or those unable to use manual means?
- What will be the cost impact to the homeowner and landscape contractor?
- Are you at least willing to partially share in the cost for consumers and professionals to convert to battery power? A rebate so to speak. For one unit, it could cost a professional as much as \$2000, including enough batteries to run the unit for a four-to-six-hour period of any given day.
- Will current users comply with your ordinance or just take a chance?
- Will people use time consuming tools, or will they leave the debris?
- Has this done anything to lessen the appearance of their city?

If you decide to check this out for yourself, you can talk to council members from the cities that already have a ban, but don't overlook talking to the enforcers, local lawn care providers, and homeowners to learn the true impact.

Best Regards,



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Click: [APPENDIX](#) for details and [links](#) to references.