January 5, 2019

Mike Lofgren
Contributing Columnist
Washington Monthly

RE: https://washingtonmonthly.com/2019/01/04/the-case-for-lawn-care-regulation/

Dear Mr. Lofgren:

I see from your article of January 4, 2019, that you have added your voice to the opposition of leaf blowers. The problem is, you have not taken the time to research the issue before displaying your unsubstantiated opinion and the opinions of others about the subject. Reading Mr. James Fallows opinion does not constitute research. Quoting the edmonds.com falsehood about the Ford F-150 vs. the leaf blower is likewise unwise.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered lawn care products. Information on my qualifications and expertise on this subject can be found at the following websites:

http://leafblowernoise.com/about%20the%20author.pdf

http://leafblowernoise.com/List%20of%20cities.htm

The internet is crowded with false leaf blower information. Someone says something based on false logic that fits well with another person's point of view and suddenly it becomes fact. And when an actual fact comes along that does not fit an anti-leaf blower advocates conviction, it is derided and ignored. It's truly sad because some very bad decisions can be made when they are based on innuendo, exaggeration and outdated information

Calling the two-stroke engine "antiquated technology" is proof of your lack of understanding about this design. Are you aware that by law unburned hydrocarbon emission has been reduced by 85 to 90%? Are you aware that the blue smoke in the exhaust common to old two-stroke engines is now gone? Are you aware that an automobile produces 30 times more hydrocarbon pollution per week than does a leaf blower which runs for 10 minutes per week on average per household? Have you considered the global warming issue? Did you know that automobiles contribute 230 times more CO^2 than a leaf blower?

I don't think you have any concept of what air pollution really is, unless you have been to Cairo or Shanghai, Shenzhen or even Mexico City for that matter. Out of 106 countries around the world, 85 of them have worse pollution than the United States. Those that are better, have a very low population density. In the true scope of things, leaf blower exhaust emission in this country is insignificant. There should be no comparison to what is happening in other countries. Exhaust emission has no bearing in this issue and is in no way justification for banning blowers.

Even though it has been shown to not be true, you feel that gasoline powered backpack blowers will blow lung-irritating dust and dirt into the air containing mold spores and other pathogens. Why then are you advocating the use of battery-operated blowers? Are they not capable of doing the same?

http://leafblowernoise.com/#Are_leaf_blowers_hazardous_to_your_health

You also say electric lawn equipment is “inherently quieter”. How can you say that? Have you ever compared them? We have.

Battery powered leaf blowers exist because there is a market for them. To confirm this, just check out the leaf blower aisle at Lowes or Home Depot. They are popular with homeowners with small lots and with women that enjoy caring for their outdoor property. They are light in weight and easy to start. However, their performance is not there yet for practical use. Air flow and velocity are not sufficient for the professional and anyone with a large or highly landscaped yard. As for running time, well I’m sorry to say, it’s dismal. From the Internet, let me paraphrase from some customer comments:

- *I agree with several previous reviews; the battery life is maybe 20 minutes tops after a full charge.*
- *Charged it out of the box. Got about 15 minutes run time.*
- *Total run time, 8 minutes 35 seconds*

Obviously, the broom and rake are the only tools that don’t make noise. These are fine if you’re into sweating and hard work. Perhaps some homeowners would prefer this over an exercycle or a treadmill. It will take them at least eight times longer using a broom or a rake than it would with a leaf blower. But for the rest of us and for the professional, this is an archaic and unacceptable approach. Some unfortunately will use potable water to clean their driveways and sidewalks, something the leaf blower was designed to prevent when it was invented 50 years ago.

Do you know what will happen if a blower ban becomes reality? You should find out by talking to those cities that have tried it. Opposition to a ban and bad press usually comes to light after it is implemented. You probably have heard that there is a court case in Maplewood NJ, contesting a recent blower ban. Like an iceberg, this issue is deeper than it appears to be on the surface. Many problems can arise from a blower ban; for the city, for homeowners and for landscapers that depend on the leaf blower.

http://leafblowernoise.com/#Will_a_ban_work

http://www.leafblowernoise.com/Palo%20Alto%20suit.pdf

It appears that you are blaming the professional user for the sound issue. Keep in mind that people get upset when they must listen to blowers in the evening or early in the morning, and on Sundays or holidays. Sometimes blowers run for what seems like hours at a time. Homeowners, not professionals, are the ones that work in their yards well into the evening or very early in the morning when people may still be sleeping. They are the ones that use their blowers on Sundays and holidays. Because they buy inexpensive and therefore underpowered units, they must run them longer to get the job done, another big irritation. Most professionals limit their workday to normal business hours. They are interested in getting the job done as quickly as possible, usually less than ten minutes per residence. As with any profession, time is money. If it comes to having to write legislation, you would do well to have different requirements for homeowners versus professionals. When you solicit information from professionals, you will find that they do not understand all the issues, but they can tell you how a blower ban will impact their income or how their customers will react to a cost increase.

If noise is in fact the issue, then ban the noise, not all gasoline powered leaf blowers. So how is this possible and how can it be enforced. It’s simple. Require the use of “Quiet” leaf blowers.

Okay, so you're thinking, right, quiet blowers! Do they really exist? You mention that blower impellers should be better balanced harmonically. I'm sure you mean that they should be quieter. Well, they are quieter by magnitudes. Now I'm not trying to sell anything, even though the following might sound like a commercial, but I'd like to proceed with an explanation about how and why quiet blowers came to be.

> *A number of years ago my engineering department developed the first "Quiet" gasoline powered leaf blower. This was done in direct response to complaints from the field regarding leaf blower noise. ECHO Inc. now has five designs in their product line that are "Quiet". Today, several other manufacturers have joined in, investing millions of dollars in tooling, testing and new assembly lines to provide this important alternative to a blower ban. It is important because at this time, it is the only workable solution to the leaf blower noise issue.*
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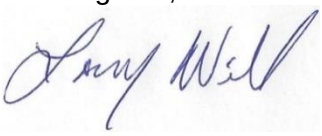
> *The industry attaches a label to the blower that indicates sound level, which is measured by a third party such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL), according to a highly detailed ANSI Standard that controls all the measurement variables. This makes it easy to determine sound magnitude at the point of purchase and in the field by the enforcement officer. There is no need to catch the operator in the act nor is there a need to take any sound measurements. If the proper label is not present, there is a violation. The number to look for is 65 dB(A), measured at 50 feet. This represents a 75% reduction in sound from a typical noisy leaf blower at 77 dB(A).*
>
> *http://leafblowernoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg.*

These blowers have been available for more than 20 years. I'm sure there are already many quiet gasoline-powered leaf blowers in your area, but the problem is, if there is only one noisy blower being used in the neighborhood, all leaf blowers are reviled. If you have not actually heard the difference between these two blowers (65 vs. 77 dB(A)), you really should seek out a comparative noise demonstration. These numbers may not seem significant, but keep in mind that for every 6 dB(A) reduction in sound, the sound pressure is reduced by 50%.

Leaf blowers are firmly entrenched as indispensable tools to anyone that has ever used them. The best thing to do is find a solution that everyone can support, especially the professionals. Let me say this one more time, "Ban the noise, not the blower!"

I could go into much more detail in this document, pointing out all the inaccuracies you will be expected to believe, but for the facts and to save time here, you can find more information about the leaf blower at my website. You really should consider presenting these facts to your readers, so they are not misled by opinions exclusively. Should you have any specific questions that are not adequately answered, please respond to this email or call with your inquiry.

Best regards,



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