

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 167
(Delegate Foley)

Government, Labor, and Elections

Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Purchase and Use - Prohibitions

This bill, subject to specified exceptions, prohibits, (1) beginning July 1, 2026, the State from purchasing a gasoline-powered leaf blower and (2) beginning January 1, 2031, the use of a gasoline-powered leaf blower by the State and its contractors and subcontractors working on State-owned land. Each State agency in the Executive Branch must monitor and enforce that agency's compliance with the bill. The bill also establishes (1) a provision relating to the authority of local governments to enact standards relating to gasoline-powered leaf blowers and (2) a requirement for the State and its contractors and subcontractors to comply with local standards that are at least as stringent as the bill's standards when managing State property. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: State expenditures (all/multiple funds) increase, potentially significantly for some agencies, beginning in FY 2027, as discussed below. Revenues are not directly affected.

Local Effect: Minimal or none.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Gasoline-powered leaf blower” means a combustion engine-powered handheld, backpack, or walk-behind leaf or grass blower, vacuum, or leaf debris removal device. The term includes an electric leaf blower connected to a generator powered by

gasoline or other fossil fuels; it does not include a stationary or tow-behind leaf vacuum, mulcher, debris loader device, or snow blower.

Applicability of the Bill

The bill's provisions do not apply to (1) wildland fire suppression activities; (2) prescribed burn management activities; (3) fire-fighting activities carried out by authorized personnel; or (4) emergency response activities, as specified.

Local Authority and State Compliance with Local Standards

The bill does not affect the authority of a local government to enact its own standards that are at least as stringent as the standards established in the bill or that begin on an earlier date than the dates established in the bill. Further, the State (or any contractor or subcontractor employed by the State) must comply with local standards that are at least as stringent as the standards established in the bill when managing State property.

Current Law: State statute and regulations are silent with regard to leaf blowers, gasoline-powered or otherwise.

Noise Control

The bill's provisions are added to Title 3 ("Noise Control") of the Environment Article, which requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to adopt environmental noise standards, sound level limits, and noise control rules and regulations as necessary to protect the public health, the general welfare, and property. Chapter 360 of 2012 (House Bill 190) repealed a requirement under Title 3 that MDE enforce the sound level limits and noise control rules and regulations adopted under the title and authorized local governments to (1) adopt environmental noise standards, sound level limits, and noise control rules and regulations and (2) enforce sound level limits and noise control rules and regulations adopted under the title. MDE indicates that Chapter 360 effectively transferred noise enforcement authority to local governments.

MDE's regulations that establish environmental noise standards are expressly not applicable to lawn care and snow removal equipment (daytime only) when used and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 (CSNA) (Chapter 38), among other things, requires the State to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 60% from 2006 levels by 2031.

Local Restrictions on the Use of Gasoline-powered Leaf Blowers

Several local jurisdictions in the State, including Montgomery County, Baltimore City, the cities of Annapolis and Hyattsville, and the Town of University Park, already ban the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers in their jurisdictions.

State Expenditures: State expenditures (all/multiple funds) for several State agencies increase beginning in fiscal 2027 due to costs associated with various State agencies' migration of their gasoline-powered leaf blowers to electrically powered alternatives, including higher upfront costs for the electrically powered alternatives compared to gasoline-powered leaf blowers and any needed charging infrastructure. State expenditures for affected agencies may increase further beginning in fiscal 2031 for any increased costs for State agencies' landscaping contracts and the need for State contractors and subcontractors to migrate to electrically powered leaf blowers under the bill. Beginning as early as fiscal 2027, there may also be impacts from the requirement to comply with local standards that are at least as stringent as the standards established in the bill or that begin on an earlier date than the dates established in the bill.

Several State agencies and institutions of higher education provided estimates of the bill's impact that attempt to quantify costs, but most of them were unable to provide complete information regarding the potential fiscal effects of the bill. In addition, the Department of General Services, which manages a significant amount of State-owned property, did not respond to a request for information regarding the fiscal effect of the bill. As such, a reliable estimate of the overall impact on State expenditures cannot be made at this time. Nevertheless, based on information provided by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, and several State institutions of higher education, expenditures for some State entities may increase significantly.

For example, DNR advises that its expenditures increase by an estimated \$76,000 annually in fiscal 2027 through 2031 to gradually purchase battery-operated blowers and batteries to replace gasoline-powered equipment. DNR notes that other factors likely increase costs further but are difficult to quantify, including increased costs to hire contractors and subcontractors and any impacts from any applicable local standards.

It should be noted that the fiscal impact of the bill may be reduced to the extent State agencies begin to phase out gasoline-powered leaf blowers to comply with the greenhouse gas emissions reduction requirements under CSNA even in the absence of the bill.

Additionally, because the bill prohibits the purchase, but not the use, of gasoline-powered leaf blowers beginning July 1, 2026, State agencies have time to gradually purchase electric

alternatives. This may mitigate the impact on some agencies to the extent they would have needed to replace existing equipment even in the absence of the bill.

Small Business Effect: The bill has a potential meaningful impact on small business landscaping contractors that will need to migrate to electrically powered lawn and garden care equipment in order to be awarded State contracts. However, this impact is delayed until fiscal 2031, which allows affected contractors time to gradually shift to compliant equipment.

Any small businesses that sell gasoline-powered leaf blowers and/or electric leaf blowers may also be meaningfully affected by the bill's prohibition on the purchase of gasoline-powered leaf blowers by the State (beginning July 1, 2026), and/or the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers by the State and its contractors and subcontractors (beginning January 1, 2031).

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 701 of 2025; HB 91 of 2024; and HB 399 of 2023.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Montgomery County; cities of Annapolis and Hyattsville; Town of University Park; Maryland Municipal League; Baltimore City Community College; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Maryland Department of the Environment; Department of Juvenile Services; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 13, 2026

jg/lgc

Analysis by: Kathleen P. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:

(410) 946-5510

(301) 970-5510