

2024 -- S 2277

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- 2025 BATTERY-POWERED
LEAF BLOWER PILOT REBATE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduced By: Senators Zurier, Lauria, Gu, Euer, and DiMario

Date Introduced: February 12, 2024

Referred To: Senate Commerce

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 6.3

4 2025 BATTERY-POWERED LEAF BLOWER PILOT REBATE AND EDUCATION

5 PROGRAM

6 **42-6.3-1. Short title.**

7 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "2025 Battery-Powered Leaf Blower
8 Pilot Rebate and Education Program."

9 **42-6.3-2. Definitions.**

10 As used in this chapter:

11 (1) "Battery-powered leaf blower" or "e-blower" means a battery-powered electric device
12 that propels air out of a nozzle to move debris such as leaves and grass cuttings. The term includes
13 a hand-held or back-pack configuration of a leaf blower.

14 (2) "DEM" means the department of environmental management.

15 (3) "OER" means the office of energy resources.

16 (4) "Pilot rebate program" and "rebate program" means the pilot rebate program operated
17 by OER and provided for in this chapter, as more fully described in § 42-6.3-4.

18 **42-6.3-3. Purpose.**

1 The purpose of this chapter shall be to reduce air and noise pollution by helping commercial
2 landscapers adopt zero-emissions technology, benefitting the health of landscape workers and
3 surrounding communities. This shall be accomplished through a pilot rebate program for the
4 purchase of battery-powered leaf blowers and an education program to help landscaping
5 professionals prepare to succeed with zero-emissions equipment.

6 **42-6.3-4. Pilot rebate program.**

7 (a) There is hereby established a pilot rebate program to be operated through the OER for
8 the purchase of battery-powered leaf blowers. This rebate program shall be funded by an initial
9 appropriation from the general assembly in the amount of three hundred fifty thousand dollars
10 (\$350,000).

11 (b) Professional landscaper businesses registered with either the Rhode Island secretary of
12 state, or the department of business regulation, or the department of labor and training, or who are
13 licensed as operating a landscaping business by any of those entities, shall be eligible to receive a
14 rebate up to one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) on the purchase of a battery-powered leaf
15 blower and related batteries, with a limit of two (2) rebates per registered entity pursuant to the
16 provisions of subsection (d) of this section, through this rebate program. Nonprofit entities and
17 government entities shall not be eligible to participate in the rebate program. Any person signing
18 an application for the rebate program shall be at least eighteen (18) years of age in order to qualify
19 for the rebate.

20 (c) The application process for the rebate program shall be as follows:

21 (1) An applicant shall submit an application for the rebate, including proof that the
22 applicant is a Rhode Island business registered or licensed as set forth in subsection (b) of this
23 section. Applications shall be processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

24 (2) Approved applicants shall receive a voucher for the rebate and a proof of disposal form.

25 (3) After receiving the voucher, the applicant shall then purchase an e-blower in
26 compliance with the provisions of this section. The voucher shall be valid only on the purchase of
27 a new e-blower and related batteries. Eligible e-blowers shall be battery powered. The e-blower
28 shall be purchased from a retail store physically located in Rhode Island. Online purchases shall be
29 valid only if the e-blower is purchased from an online retailer with a direct association or prior
30 agreement with a local Rhode Island retail store. Purchasing an e-blower online and then arranging
31 for pickup at a local Rhode Island address without a pre-existing agreement shall not be considered
32 a valid purchase for purposes of the rebate program.

33 (4) The applicant shall subsequently dispose of a gas-powered leaf blower(s) owned or
34 used by the applicant, consistent with resource recovery corporation guidelines, and submit a

1 complete proof of disposal form with the stamp or signature from the discard site. Leaf blowers
2 which are turned in for disposal shall be rendered unusable and shall not be resold; provided that,
3 these leaf blowers may be recycled for scrap metal.

4 (i) If an electric handheld model is purchased, either a handheld or backpack model shall
5 be turned in.

6 (ii) If an electric backpack model is purchased, a backpack blower shall be turned in.

7 (5) Within sixty (60) days of receiving a voucher, the applicant shall return the voucher,
8 copy of sales receipt of the e-blower, and proof of disposal to receive reimbursement. The receipt
9 shall include the purchase date of the new e-blower, the purchase price, and proof that Rhode Island
10 sales tax was applied during the transaction. Applicants shall also:

11 (i) Provide the e-blower serial number, make and model; and

12 (ii) Applicants shall pledge to maintain ownership and operation of the e-blower for at least
13 one year after purchase.

14 (6) Applicants that receive a rebate shall be required to complete a bi-annual blower usage
15 survey to be used by the State of Rhode Island for future rebate program considerations.

16 (d) The rebate amount shall be limited to two (2) e-blower rebates of up to one thousand
17 five hundred dollars (\$1,500) each, per registered entity, based upon the purchase price of the new
18 e-blower(s) or batteries. The amount of rebates a registered entity may receive shall not exceed
19 three thousand dollars (\$3,000) in total.

20 (e) To qualify for the rebate program, the purchase date shall be within the rebate program
21 dates, which shall commence January 1, 2025, and end January 1, 2026. Rebates shall not be
22 provided to purchases made before or after these dates.

23 (f) Rebate recipients shall independently select and purchase their own e-blower and
24 related batteries and assume all liability for such products.

25 (g) Applications shall be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. Rebate processing times
26 may vary. The rebate shall not include Rhode Island taxes, or shipping fees.

27 (h) The OER shall have the right to amend or terminate this rebate program at any time
28 when funding for the program expires. The OER may also request continuance of the program if
29 the OER determines that the program merits continued funding and operation.

30 **42-6.3-5. Education and training.**

31 (a) The OER and DEM shall partner to develop and provide educational opportunities for
32 professional landscapers to learn best practices and safety for battery-powered landscaping
33 equipment. As the landscaping industry is shifting to electric operations, this training will help
34 Rhode Islanders prepare for continued success in a changing industry. Fifty thousand dollars

1 (\$50,000) of the appropriation authorized pursuant to this chapter shall be designated to fund this
2 education and training.

3 (b) Components of the education program shall include:

4 (1) In-person demonstrations of battery-powered landscaping equipment where
5 participants can try out equipment. These events shall offer information in multiple languages,
6 including, but not limited to, Spanish and English, in order to reach as broad an audience as
7 possible, and shall be held in different counties to ensure accessibility throughout the state.

8 (2) Online or in-person classes shall cover topics such as:

9 (i) Health and environmental costs of two (2) stroke engines and other gas-powered
10 equipment;

11 (ii) State of the art and future prospects of electric landscaping technology;

12 (iii) Batteries for landscaping equipment;

13 (iv) Safe handling and storage, charging, life cycle, disposal, and recycling of electric and
14 battery-operated landscaping tools and batteries;

15 (v) Financing and return on investment for electric equipment;

16 (vi) How to equip a landscaping business with battery-powered equipment;

17 (vii) Successful strategies for managing a battery-powered landscaping business; and

18 (viii) Low-impact landscaping practices, such as mulching leaves around trees and shrubs
19 and mulching into lawn.

20 (c) The OER, in consultation with the department of environmental management, shall
21 provide outreach in promoting the program through relevant media and professional organizations,
22 and printed and online media. The OER shall strive to broadly disseminate information about the
23 program in order to reach all communities in Rhode Island, and shall prepare materials in multiple
24 languages, including, but not limited to, English and Spanish. This outreach shall include basic
25 information about gas and electric leaf blowers as described in subsection (b) of this section, as
26 well as the rebate program. The OER and the department of environmental management shall post
27 this information, on their respective websites.

28 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- 2025 BATTERY-POWERED
LEAF BLOWER PILOT REBATE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

1 This act would establish a pilot program for battery powered leaf blower pilot rebate and
2 education program in an effort to reduce air and noise pollution by helping commercial landscapers
3 adopt zero-emissions technology, as well as benefit the health of landscape workers and
4 surrounding communities. This objective would be accomplished through a pilot rebate program
5 for the purchase of battery-powered leaf blowers and an education program to help landscaping
6 professionals prepare to succeed with zero-emissions equipment with an initial appropriation from
7 the general assembly in the amount of three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000).

8 This act would take effect upon passage.

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