

Quiet Communities wins landmark noise pollution ruling against the EPA

In a major win for public health, court rules EPA ignored its duties under the Noise Control Act of 1972 for more than 40 years.

LINCOLN, MA, UNITED STATES, July 22, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Quiet Communities, Inc. announced today that the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency unreasonably abdicated its responsibilities under the federal Noise Control Act of 1972, by failing to comply with mandatory obligations under the law for more than 40 years.



Quiet Communities, Inc. logo

Quiet Communities and Jeanne M. Kempthorne sued EPA to challenge the EPA's failure to implement and enforce the federal Noise Control Act, which requires EPA to, among other duties: inform the public about the health consequences of noise pollution and safe levels of noise exposure; identify major sources of noise and set emission standards for those sources; and designate and regulate labeling of products that are capable of mitigating exposure to noise or of emitting excessive noise.

In its ruling, the court recognized that "EPA almost entirely stopped implementing the Act...more than four decades ago" and had "little trouble concluding that the EPA has unreasonably delayed in carrying out its duties" to keep the public informed about the harms caused by noise pollution, the levels at which noise exposure causes such harm, and the major sources of noise that do so.

The case will move next to the remedy phase in which the court will determine the steps EPA will be required to undertake to fulfill its duties and the timeline for doing so.

Quiet Communities is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing health and environmental harm from noise pollution. Founder and President Jamie Banks commented: "In the time since the Noise Control Act was passed in the early 1970s, the science linking noise exposure to serious impacts on health and well-being has advanced dramatically. We know that noise can seriously injure both physical and mental health as well as impede learning, all of which come with high costs to our nation. Unfortunately, the EPA has ignored its responsibilities to regulate noise for 40 years perpetuating the perception of the public and government officials that noise is simply an annoyance or a nuisance rather than the very serious health hazard it is. This decision will change that."

Plaintiff Jeanne Kempthorne, a former federal prosecutor who herself was injured by noise exposure, said, "The winner here is the American people who have the right to expect the federal government to comply with laws Congress enacted to protect them from major health risks. This case is a clarion call to EPA to give public officials and ordinary citizens the information they need to make personal and public policy decisions to mitigate the serious and irreparable harms caused by excessive noise exposure."

Quiet Communities and Ms. Kempthorne were represented in this case by Sanne Knudsen of the Regulatory and Environmental Law and Policy Clinic at the University of Washington School of Law. Knudsen says this case is a win for public health and the rule of law: "Agencies simply don't have the power to ignore Congress. That EPA ignored the law as written for 40 years meant real people suffered real injuries unnecessarily. Hopefully this case can be a catalyst for a future with higher quality of life, less suffering, and more understanding around the significance of noise-related harms."

Case No. 1:23-CV-1649

Decision available at: [noise control act lawsuit decision.623.pdf](#)

Complaint available at: [noise control act lawsuit.623.pdf](#)

About Quiet Communities

Quiet Communities, Inc. is a nonprofit organization addressing noise as a public health and environmental issue. We work with researchers, clinicians, communities, and policymakers to advance science-based noise policy that protects human health and the natural environment.

www.quietcommunities.org

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