

Nixon's "Letter to Governors Urging Citizen Participation in Environmental Programs During Earth Week."

April 12, 1972

Dear Governor:

Recently I proclaimed the week of April 17-23 as national "Earth Week," and I would like to ask your assistance in making that period an occasion for all citizens to work together on improving and restoring our environment. Surely there could be few issues of greater moment to America.

As I observed in that proclamation, "The environmental awakening marks a new maturity in our attitudes toward the relationship of man to his surroundings.

...We have made a beginning in this new era of environmental enlightenment. But it is only a beginning. Every American and every citizen of the world must make a conscious and sustained effort if we are to succeed in protecting this earth which we all share."

At the Federal level, we have made a strong and irreversible commitment to this cause, setting up new agencies within the government, greatly increasing our financial support, and asking for a very large package of new laws, as set forth most recently in my message to Congress of February 8, 1972. I am most anxious that we now secure passage of these 24 pieces of legislation, for we must have the proper tools if we are to succeed in this task.

As you are aware, there is also a special need to enlist our young people in this effort. Their involvement will not only serve to renew our environment but should also be an important step in developing an informed and concerned citizenry. Last October I established the Environmental Merit Awards Program so that secondary school children could fulfill their deeply felt commitments; already, more than 2,500 high schools representing all 50 States have registered in this program.

During this coming Earth Week, I hope you will impress upon the citizens of your State how important it is that they seek a better understanding of environmental needs and opportunities on a continuing basis. Certainly we will achieve the quality of life that we want only if we make each and every day a part of Earth Week.

With best personal regards,
Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON

Richard Nixon: "Letter to Governors Urging Citizen Participation in Environmental Programs During Earth Week.," April 12, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3371>.

Obama's "Remarks on the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day"

April 22, 2010

Hello, everybody! How are you? Now, this is a good-looking crowd. *[Laughter]* Thank you so much, everybody, for coming.

Today we celebrate 40 years of Earth Day. Now, obviously, Earth has been around longer than that. *[Laughter]* But we have been celebrating Earth Day for 40 years, which was a bright moment in our Nation's history and a milestone in the ongoing fight to protect our environment.

Many of you know the history. In 1970, a Senator from Wisconsin named Gaylord Nelson hired a young graduate student named Denis Hayes, who is with us today. Where's Denis? There he is. He still looks like a young graduate student. *[Laughter]* And so Denis helped to coordinate the first Earth Day. And together, they raised their voices and called on every American to take action on behalf of our environment.

And in the four decades since, millions of Americans have heeded that call and joined together to protect the planet. And we've made immense progress since that day, from the landmark legislation of the 1970s, the Clean Air and the Clean Water Act, to the conservation of America's precious landscapes.

I know that many of you have played an important role at one stage or another in these victories, and their impact can be felt today and will be felt tomorrow. And as a parent, I'm grateful for the good fight that so many of you have fought, because it means that I'm going to be able to pass on to Malia and Sasha and maybe some grandchildren down the line this incredible bounty not only of the United States of America but the world as a whole.

And along the way, Earth Day has become much more than a date on the calendar. It's come to represent the simple truth that with each challenge comes the opportunity to make the world a better place.

So since taking office, we have seized that opportunity. With your help, we've made a historic investment in clean energy that will not only create the jobs of tomorrow but will also lay the foundation for long-term economic growth. We've continued to invest in innovators and entrepreneurs who want to unleash the next wave of clean energy. We've strengthened our investment in our most precious resources: the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the parks and public spaces that we enjoy.

And together, we've also renewed our commitment to passing a comprehensive energy and climate bill that will safeguard our planet and spur innovation and help us to compete in the 21st century.

So looking out into the Rose Garden today, we see a lot of people who will help us achieve these goals: the business owners who know that protecting our environment is good for business; the Members of Congress who are helping to carry us along in the House and the Senate; the members of my "green" Cabinet who are helping to shape the policies that we're fighting for; and the environmental leaders who are on the ground fighting each and every day because they understand what's at stake.

So together, you represent, what I believe, is most inspiring about Earth Day, and that is the belief that each of us individually, from different backgrounds and different walks of life, have the capacity to make an enormous difference.

I think we all understand that the task ahead is daunting, that the work ahead will not be easy and it's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take your leadership. It's going to take all of your ideas. And it will take all of us coming together in the spirit of Earth Day, not only on Earth Day but every day, to make the dream of a clean energy economy and a clean world a reality. I'm confident, though, that we can do it. And I want to thank all of you for your support, your counsel, your occasional grumbling—*[laughter]*—and your dedication, because without you, we couldn't accomplish everything that needs to be accomplished.

So thank you very much, everybody. Enjoy the Rose Garden. Thank you.

Barack Obama: "Remarks on the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day," April 22, 2010. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=87790>.

