

Concerned about increasing environmental degradation and the political indifference to act, United States Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin called for an “Environmental Teach-in” to be held on April 22, 1970. Twenty million people across the country answered his call to action to participate in the inaugural Earth Day, initiating what has become a world-wide campaign to protect our global environment.

Today, Earth Day is celebrated by over 500 million people and 175 nations, but despite this growing participation and increasing awareness of our planet’s environmental challenges, our current efforts are simply not enough to offset what former Vice President Gore has called the “inconvenient truth” – that our earth is suffering from an environmental emergency caused in large part by human activity.

Indeed, no longer can anyone deny that climate change is real and that human activity contributes to its severity. In February, the world’s top climate scientists represented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

put out two landmark reports – one concluding that global warming is ‘unequivocal’ and that human activity is the main cause; the other documenting how species, water supplies, ice sheets and regional climate conditions are already responding to rising temperatures related to global warming.

Despite its grim assessment of the extent of global warming and the current trends, the panel also made clear that global warming and its harmful consequences can be substantially blunted by prompt action by both developed and developing countries around the world. As the planet’s biggest emitter of harmful greenhouse gases, the United States has a

responsibility and a moral obligation to take a lead role in addressing global climate change. The new House of Representatives has already taken some key steps to address global climate change and commit to reduce our dependence on air-polluting fuels . For the first time, the House has created a Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. This Select Committee will play a key role in informing Congress and the public, developing policy initiatives, and assuring we make real progress over the next two years.

In its first 100 hours, the House also passed a bill that repeals \$14 billion in oil subsidies and shifts those resources to investments in clean, alternative energy sources and energy efficiency. In addition, the House has already passed a budget that places a high priority on increasing support for clean renewable energy and making America more energy independent.

The next step is to reform our nation's energy policy to invest more in developing alternative renewable energy sources that are less damaging to our environment. To demonstrate our continuing commitment on an issue that is absolutely critical to America's national, economic and environmental security, I have introduced the PROGRESS Act - Program for Real Energy Security - that constitutes a major national effort to make substantial investments in the development of alternative, renewable sources of energy, conservation technology and vehicle efficiency.

In addition, the House will be considering the Farm Bill that will include extensive provisions on promoting biofuels and calls on American farmers to play a role in

fueling our energy independence. From corn in the Midwest to soybeans and barley harvested in our state of Maryland, we grow the crops that can be converted into the biofuels that power our cars and can power our energy future.

As we recognize Earth Day and celebrate the steps we've taken since 1970 to demand a safer, cleaner and healthier world, we must also recommit ourselves to the goals that will preserve our planet for future generations. We simply cannot ignore our addiction to foreign sources of oil or the negative impact our habits our having on the environment any longer. America must provide strong leadership to combat these global

threats. I pledge my continued commitment to serving as a leader in Congress as we explore ways to address global climate change, pursue an energy independent America, preserve our precious natural resources, and actualize the noble ideals represented by the original call of Earth Day.