Scholarship changes secure first-round OK

Access Missouri bill faces second vote.

By Terry Ganey

JEFFERSON CITY — Public university students would get more state scholarship money and private college students less under a plan given first-round approval in the state House yesterday.

Under the new plan, students attending four-year higher education institutions in Missouri, public and private, could be eligible for as much as $2,850 under the needs-based Access Missouri Scholarship beginning in the 2014 school year. Now, the maximum award is $2,150 for students attending public four-year institutions and $4,600 for students attending private colleges.

With the 133-20 vote, the House put its stamp of approval on an agreement worked out behind closed doors between leaders of public and private universities over the past few weeks. The discussions accelerated after Gov. Jay Nixon suggested eliminating the scholarship for private college students altogether in the face of the state’s budget crisis.

The legislation needs another House vote before being sent to the Senate, where a similar bill has been debated but not passed. Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia and sponsor of the bill, said the Senate and House versions contain components of the agreement among higher education officials, including leaders of the University of Missouri.

The three components are equalization, implementation in 2014 and the elimination of a sunset provision. Final legislative approval of the change is uncertain with three weeks remaining in the session.

The existing differentials grew out of an agreement between public and private universities about four years ago, when student loans were sold to raise money for capital improvement projects. Since public universities were in line to get the money for building projects, private colleges, whose students had created some of the student loan assets, were given a greater share of the scholarship fund.

But then the student loan assets failed to deliver enough money for the construction projects, and public schools wanted the arrangement renegotiated. During the 2009 fiscal year about 21,000 public university students and 11,400 private school students received benefits.

Although the House was in agreement on equalization, the debate mainly centered on how long the new system would remain in effect and when it would begin. House members complained...
that no lawmakers were privy to the deal among the colleges and pointed out that private colleges still could raise tuition while public universities' tuition was capped.

Referring to Columbia College, Stephens and MU, Rep. Mary Still, D-Columbia, said there are "a lot of fine colleges in my district." But Still added that when her constituents "learn state tax money is going for private school scholarships that is twice as much as for public school scholarships, they are shocked. I think most of your constituents would be shocked about this."

The House defeated an amendment Still offered that would have implemented the equalization in 2012.

Rep. Mike Thomson, R-Maryville and sponsor of the equalization change, said it is important to preserve the deal that had been made among the higher education institutions.

"We can settle something we have been debating for three years," Thomson said.

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Surrounded by education leaders from across the state, Governor Jay Nixon calls on the legislature to pass tax credit reform before the end of this session.

At a press conference in front of his office Wednesday (video after the jump), Nixon pointed out that in 2009 Missouri spent the most money of any state in the country on historic preservation tax credits, totaling $180 million. He says credits like those need to be scaled back or have more requirements, so that money can be better used elsewhere.

"We’ve got to shift off of the current method which is basically an entitlement. I mean you can, in essence, if there’s something that’s on the historic site you can in essence pull a back hoe up and start digging and we gotta start reimbursing," Nixon said.

Missouri spent also spent the second most of any state on low income housing tax credits in 2009, $176 million.

"California, with a population six times the size of Missouri, awarded half as much," Nixon said.

He says some of the 60 active credits, of course, have value to the state and its residents, but they simply need to be kept in check and ‘calibrated.’

"I think we need to have accountability in there. We need to be able to choose in some method whether its on criteria the legislature lays out, or efforts by the director and his department and then transparency on that so that each year we can see what those were spent on and each year we can see what the return on them was," Nixon said.

Nixon says over the past 10 years, the use of state tax credits has grown by 86%, totaling $585 million last year. He says it’s important to spend state money where there’s the best return on investment, and he says education tops that list.

State public education leaders from the elementary to graduate level joined Nixon for the press conference in support of tax credit reform.
"We are at a tipping point. We've had a decade of underfunding the requirements we have to provide high quality public education to Missourians. The question is, in this budgetary time, where is that money going to come from?" said Gary Forsee, President of the University of Missouri system.

"Every dollar we spend on tax credits is a dollar that isn't available for our universities to invest in the next generation of teachers, doctors and engineers. The value of tax credits must be weighed against their cost to our classrooms, out colleges and other vital state services. In the zero sum game we live in in the state budget those numbers add up quickly," Nixon said.

Nixon thinks a bill sponsored by Senator Dempsey addressing this issue has the best chance of passing. He also says he believes there is enough time to get this through the legislature, despite that fact that the session ends in roughly three weeks.
Move to combine state education boards stalls as end of session looms

By Rebecca Berg
April 22, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

JEFFERSON CITY — With a mere three weeks remaining of the 2010 state legislative session, a move to consolidate Missouri's two education departments stalled on the Senate floor Wednesday.

Tuesday, the Senate approved one constitutional amendment to consolidate the two agencies. But on Wednesday, they stalled on another constitutional amendment that would define the details of how the unified education department would be governed.

Both constitutional amendments, if approved by the legislature, would require statewide voter approval to take effect.

Supporters said that consolidating the two education departments would save the state millions of dollars and increase efficiency. But opponents said they worried the measure would not guarantee the state cost savings and could throw Missouri's schools into chaos.

Sen. Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield, actively stalled the legislation from reaching a vote. She said the resolution would threaten the level of experience in members of the state's existing boards.

"What we're getting ready to do by putting these two boards together is a pretty chaotic situation," Cunningham said. "I agree with doing it, but I think it's going to bring some chaos."

Another legislator, Sen. Jim Lembke, R-St. Louis, echoed Cunningham's concerns of chaos and said he worried that combining the boards would do little to improve efficiency.
"It seems to me what this is doing is taking a couple of dysfunctional boards and just replacing them with another board," Lembke said.

The resolution's sponsor, Senate President Pro Tem Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, attempted to address detractors' concerns with assurances that the legislation was a work in progress.

"Your comments are where we're trying to go," he said.

The piece of legislation was ultimately laid over after lengthy discussion and multiple amendments.

After debate on the action concluded, Majority Floor Leader Kevin Engler, R-Farmington, said he was encouraged by the resolution's progress on the floor and hoped to see it taken up again Thursday. He encouraged a meeting between involved legislators prior to the resumption of debate in order to resolve disagreements.

Sen. Luann Ridgeway, R-Smithville, who offered an amendment on the Senate floor, said she planned to attend the meeting if it takes place. She said she had made copies of relevant papers to take with her to the discussion.

But Cunningham, a vocal opponent of the legislation, said she knew nothing of a meeting taking place and called it "amazing." Cunningham confirmed that she would offer a second attempt to block the resolution if it reached the floor again Thursday.

"Right now, I'm just confounded at what the proposal is and what the process is," she said. "I'm flabbergasted by the process."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU students studying abroad feel effects of volcanic eruption

By Simin Wang
April 22, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — When her spring break ended on April 18, MU student Caitie Carter expected to return from Belgium to her host university in Alicante, Spain.

Instead her flight was canceled. A volcano in Iceland that caused flight cancellations across Europe managed to affect her plans as well.

Carter had to seek alternative forms of transportation to get back to the Universidad de Alicante. She took a train to Paris and stayed with her cousin while waiting to return to school.

"There have also been transportation strikes all over France, which has caused many of my trains to be canceled," Carter said in an e-mail. "My plan right now is to keep making my way south on trains or buses to get back to Spain."

Carter is not the only one caught in this situation. American students traveling throughout Europe have had their flights canceled because of the ash from the Eyjafjallajokull volcano.

Many airports have been closed for the past six days. According to Eurocontrol, the Europe-wide air traffic agency based in Brussels, more than 95,000 flights had been canceled since Thursday. Most airports reopened this week, and flights are beginning to resume.

"Many of my other friends have found ferries and other means of transportation to get back," Carter said.

Getting back is not always the most difficult part. Some MU students have other concerns, such as getting refunds from the airline companies, as well as explaining their plight to their schools.
"Getting home takes a few days by any means of transportation other than planes," Carter said. "It has also cost all of us way more money that we had planned on spending in our spring break budget."

She is unsure about getting a refund because flight delays and cancellations were caused by extraneous factors that airlines do not control. She also must deal with her unanticipated absence.

"Most teachers at my university have been understanding, although many are requiring proof of flight cancellations, so that people unaffected aren't just taking an extended vacation," Carter said.

MU is monitoring the progress of students like Carter who are making their way back to school or trying to get home. According to Barbara Lindeman, the director of MU’s study abroad program, 201 students are studying abroad this spring, and 142 are based in Europe.

"We have contacted our colleagues at universities in Europe where MU students are studying to find out which, if any, of our students are currently traveling and experiencing difficulties in returning to their host universities," Lindeman said.

MU will also provide support around the clock if students need assistance, she said. Students studying abroad are provided with information about how to contact the MU International Center study abroad staff 24/7 in case of emergency.

In addition, the study abroad office sent an e-mail to MU students studying in Europe regarding current travel disruptions due to volcanic ash and transportation strikes.

"We have encouraged students to notify us if they need assistance," Lindeman said.

Nevertheless, MU makes it clear that students are responsible for independent travel, Lindeman added.

But she does not believe the situation will affect the students academically.

"Thousands of people in Europe are in the same situation, and professors and universities have been understanding," she said.

The 60 journalism students from the Missouri School of Journalism currently on internship or exchange programs in Europe have not experienced disrupted travel back to the U.S., said John Wilkerson, coordinator of the study abroad program.
These students are based in Ireland, Spain, France, Denmark, Belgium and the United Kingdom. Most of the programs conclude in May.

MU sophomore Emily Luft, who is on exchange at Lancaster University in England, flew home for her spring break. She was not able to return to England after her flight was canceled on April 18, and has been placed on the next available flight, which won't leave until April 27.

"My flight was re-booked for free and everyone seems to be pretty understanding at my university," she said.

"I'm kind of just trying to enjoy the experience I mean, how often does one get stranded because of an Icelandic volcano?"
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia orchestra, choirs present Bach masterpiece

By Lindsay Ross
April 22, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — With lofty comparisons to da Vinci’s painting “The Last Supper” and Michelangelo’s sculpture “David,” Paul Crabb, MU director of choral activities, alludes to the magnitude of Bach’s Mass in B minor.

“This is a monument,” Crabb said. “It’s not just a concert but an event.”

Bruce Gordon, manager of Columbia Civic Orchestra, also speaks to the piece’s iconic nature. “I would say it’s the granddaddy of all sacred music in the Western tradition,” Gordon said. “It is truly magnificent and absolutely gorgeous.”

On Friday, more than 250 singers and musicians from MU Choral Union, Columbia Civic Orchestra and University Singers will perform the work at the Missouri Theatre Center for the Arts, with Crabb conducting.

More than two hours long, the piece comprises four parts and has 27 sections. Bach, devoutly Lutheran, composed the Catholic Mass near the end of his life. The fact that it was one of his last great works adds gravity to it, said Stefan Freund, who directs the Columbia Civic Orchestra and teaches music theory and composition at MU.

“The way he wrote the piece, with its grandeur, its emotional range, its attention to detail, leads you to believe that he thought, ‘This is going to be the piece where I put all my marbles in and people will remember me for,’” Freund said.

During rehearsal on Tuesday evening, a seat in the theater felt more like a pew in a cathedral. The music rolled out through the hall with skin-tingling authority — it demanded to be heard. The emotions behind the Latin words were obvious, and the theater’s height and epic decoration added to the inspiring effect.

Mary J. Renneckar, an alto in MU Choral Union, said the work’s complex harmonies mirror the drama of the text. “Bach uses a lot of musical symbolism,” Renneckar said. “When you get
to the Crucifixion, the notes he wrote and the way he wrote them sound like the nails piercing Christ as he's nailed to the cross. It's stunning."

Renneckar, who has a master's degree in choral conducting from the University of Tulsa, said this is her first opportunity to perform the work in her 40 years of choral singing. "It's a real honor to do it," she said. "You're paying tribute to this great piece of music and great composer."

The full Mass in B minor has never been performed in Columbia before. "Either it was just too daunting to tackle or somebody wasn't crazy enough to adopt it like I was," Crabb said.

Renneckar said Columbians should be proud to have a choir with the ability to put on such an intricate, esteemed production. "This is a piece that is done in major cities in the country," she said. "It's by the far the most ambitious thing the choir has done."

Crystal Frey, an alto in Choral Union, said the rapid-fire speed of the notes makes it difficult to sing. "It can be quite exhausting," Frey said. But she is thrilled to participate in the performance; she first heard the Mass in B minor in 1983 and has been eager to sing it ever since.

"For me, it's the realization of a very long ambition," Frey said.

Crabb has felt a heavy responsibility to put his absolute best work into the preparation and production of the piece.

"If you approach one of the great works by the great composers, you better have some respect for it and say, 'We're going to do everything we can to try and give it its due,'" he said. "We never completely succeed, but we get as close as we humanly can."

The piece evokes an entire range of emotions, Freund said, "from darkest depths to the brightest lights." He believes the work can appeal to anyone, regardless of religious beliefs or musical knowledge.

"Someone who has never heard the piece should walk out of there saying, 'I didn't know music could be that powerful. I didn't realize music could make me feel like this,'" Freund said.
MU junior wins YouTube global journalism competition

By Victoria Guida
April 21, 2010 | 9:32 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Out of 148 entrants worldwide, 10 were chosen as semifinalists. In the final round, an MU junior rose to the top.

Along with four other finalists, broadcast journalism student Alex Rozier will receive a $10,000 grant for winning Project:Report, a contest sponsored by YouTube and the Pulitzer Center in which aspiring journalists submitted videos about stories not often covered by mainstream media.

"It doesn't seem like it's real at this point," Rozier said, who found out at 5 p.m. Tuesday he had won. "It's hard to put into words."

The winning video, titled "The World Mobility Problem," is centered on the PET Project. It's a Columbia organization dedicated to giving PETs, or Personal Energy Transportation vehicles, to people with disabilities in other countries.

In the video, Rozier calls the life of Mel West, the creator of the project, "anything but beige." Rozier brought West's colorful story to life in a video that follows West and the development of his project. Now, with the grant, Rozier will cover an international story.

"We're real excited for him," said his father Mark Rozier. "I know he's looking forward to the next part of it."

After he was chosen as a semifinalist for his story on an 18-year-old cheerleader with bone cancer, Alex Rozier was required to get input from others about what he should cover next. He created a Facebook group and a Twitter account asking for suggestions. He also talked to journalists at KOMU and other news organizations in Columbia and Minnesota, his home state.
"I've had so much great help from people at the university and people in broadcast, even people I don't know," Rozier said. "The Facebook group, by the end of the project, had over 700 members. A lot gave their thoughts on what I should do."

He said it made the most sense to do something local.

"The fact that it was in mid-Missouri and still had a big reach was a big reason I chose the story," he said. "The project affects more than 20 million people worldwide."

West said Rozier called him last night "as excited as can be" to tell him the news.

"He's a really outstanding young man," West said. "(He's) very capable, trained, positive, considerate, and we enjoyed working with him."

Money is the limiting factor for the PET Project, West said, and the story helped tell more people about the project.

"We have millions in the world waiting for our product, and we have volunteers waiting to build it," West said. "We don't pay for advertising. We get it free from folks like him."

As for his $10,000 grant, Rozier said he is unclear on the details, but once he knows the specifics, he will decide what to report on and where.

"From what I've been told, I guess you have up to a year after the announcement to produce it," he said. So he might go to Haiti in December to film the earthquake recovery efforts in hopes of localizing it to mid-Missouri, he said, and airing it in January for the one year anniversary of the tragedy.

The earthquake struck Haiti on January 12.

The MU junior said he also hopes to include journalism students from other sequences and journalism professors in his endeavor.

"I'm in love with this J-school here," he said. "I want to be able to say, 'Here's who I wanna take,' and we go and get it done."

For now, Rozier said he is glad to see some of his hard work paying off, and he appreciates all the support he has received.
MU to host collaborative farmers market

By Rachel Post
April 22, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Vendors from the Columbia and Boone County farmers markets will gather at Lowry Mall starting April 29 to provide local goods to the community. Vendors will sell items including produce, burgers, pasta, pie, baked goods, ice cream, honey and eggs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The market will be held once each month throughout the season on the following dates:

- April 29
- May 20
- June 24
- July 22
- August 26
- September 23
- October 28

Julie Tobias, wellness coordinator for the MU Wellness Resource Center, spearheaded the arrangement, which took place only twice last year.

"It emphasizes the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables and getting a lot of those fresh foods in your diet on a regular basis," Tobias said.

Tobias approached Caroline Todd, market manager for the Columbia Farmers' Market, with the idea.

"People like fresh, local food because they're concerned about health," Todd said. "It's food that hasn't been processed, so it's better for you."
Entities including Healthy for Life, University of Missouri Extension, Campus Dining Services, PedNet Coalition, GetAbout Columbia and Mizzou Botanical Gardens will collaborate to provide information as well as facilitate giveaways for attendees.
Earth Day finds itself in a political pickle

By MATT CAMPBELL

As Earth Day reaches middle age — it turns 40 today — will it get all the respect it’s grown to expect?

From those who love it? Always. It’s a chance for environmentalists, young and old, to look back on all that has been accomplished, but address the continuing challenges.

But in some circles, which may have broadened in recent years, not so much.

The environmental celebration that once seemed more innocently focused on planting trees, on DDT and on weeping Indians is now bound up with politics and climate change — and amid a toxic cloud of polarization and name calling.

As a result, some green movement momentum has been lost, Earth Day supporters agree. But they welcome the debates the day brings.

Critics long have accused its organizers of being anti-business or anti-growth. The Washington Post last year characterized the day a “global guilt-fest.”

Likely it will be called worse today from the right of the political spectrum, where the energetic tea party crowd resides.

A recent New York Times poll that reached more than 800 tea party supporters found that 51 percent see no serious impact from climate change, twice the rate of other Americans, and that 15 percent of supporters don’t believe climate change even exists, three times the rate of the rest of the population.

Other surveys suggest the larger public mood — recession-wracked and fearing the federal deficit — is shifting:

• More people place a greater priority on the economy than the environment.

• Nearly half believe global warming is exaggerated in the media.
The numbers of those rejecting the theory that climate change is caused by human activity are growing.

More than two years ago, when Kristin Riott joined Kansas City's Bridging the Gap group, "the phones were ringing off the hook with everybody wanting to go green."

Today the phones still ring, Riott said, "but the intensity of concern about the environment has definitely been knocked off the radar screen by what's been happening with the economy."

Others say many of the pollution problems of 40 years ago have been addressed, so now media, scientists and activist groups must hype climate change just to remain relevant.

"Global warming alarmists have overstated their case in the media," said James M. Taylor at the Heartland Institute, a nonprofit that promotes free-market solutions to environmental and other problems.

"Now the public doesn't believe much of what they're saying."

Environmentalists retort that while the easily seen problems were cleaned up, the job is not done on things that the naked eye can't detect.

That's politically difficult, said Russell Train, chief environmental adviser in 1970 to President Richard Nixon.

"Back in the '70s, people felt the threat of environmental mistakes and misbehavior," he told The Associated Press.

"There was a real threat to your health, and people knew that. Today, people will accept that as a general principle, but don't feel any immediate threat from climate change or indirect source pollution from farmers."

Environmentalists express optimism about how "green" has taken deeper root and how Earth Day fires up the faithful.

A rally to promote federal climate legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is expected to draw people from across the nation Sunday to the National Mall in Washington.

The House of Representatives last year passed a climate bill, and a bipartisan Senate plan may be unveiled Monday.

"I think there is a general sense of optimism, not pessimism," said Nate Byer, campaign director for Earth Day 2010 at the Earth Day Network in Washington.

"Climate change is the greatest threat of our time but it also presents us with opportunities ... A (good) climate bill is a jobs bill and a national security bill, and it will allow a better future for our children."
When the first Earth Day happened in 1970, it was called a “teach-in” and reflected the activism of young people and organizational lessons learned from Vietnam War protests.

The focus was pollution and overpopulation. It was also a time of general agreement between government leaders and the public that something had to be done — the Cuyahoga River in Ohio, after all, was notoriously catching fire.

Within only a few years the Environmental Protection Agency had been created and a slew of laws were on the books, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, the Water Pollution Control Act, the Solid Waste Disposal Act and the Pesticides Control Act. But a major concern of the 1970s that remains today is our dependence on fossil fuels, which is at the core of the climate-change debate. Noting the great potential for energy efficiencies, Riott said, “Clearly we are going to go on using oil and coal for some time.

“But we can certainly get much cleaner than we are now.”

Observers say the concept of being “green” has taken root in the generations of young people since the first Earth Day.

“I would say our kids are very aware,” said Kim Lilley, English teacher at Blue Valley West High School.

At the University of Missouri, where a large Sunday event is planned, Jan Weaver, director of undergraduate environmental studies, said students generally understand that their behavior can have an impact on the environment.

“But if you ask them specifics, they’d probably be as hard-pressed to give you details as the population was maybe 40 years ago,” Weaver said.

The level of optimism remains about the same despite the specter of climate change as “a game changer” that will worsen global pollution and food shortages, she said.

“But I also think that we have a lot of the technology that we need and a lot of the tools that we need to make change,” she said. “It’s going to be a rough patch for the next 10 years, but the evidence will become more compelling, and people will recognize the opportunities of moving from fossil fuels to solar and wind and biomass and hydrogen fuel cells.” Riott said it is unfortunate that political discourse has become so divisive, because if anything could unite us, it should be the destabilization of our habitat. She described herself as optimistic but realistic.

“Change on a scale we’re talking about doesn’t happen in a five-year period but happens over decades,” she said, citing labor law, women’s suffrage and slavery’s abolition.

Forty years of Earth Days have created a national awareness, she said.

“People in the 1930s didn’t know about climate change, even though scientists were aware. It wasn’t even discussed. Now we’re discussing it.”
The week of April 22 will bring annual Earth Day activities with festivities, speeches and editorials all mentioning that it is the 40th anniversary of the "beginning of the environmental movement." Earth Day 1970 was a day of teach-ins across the nation, but it was not the beginning of U.S. environmental policy making.

The founder of Earth Day is widely acknowledged to be the late Gaylord Nelson, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1962 to 1981 after serving as governor of Wisconsin. He said he had the idea after seeing anti-Vietnam War "teach-ins" in 1969 and aspired "to inspire a public demonstration so big it would shake the political establishment out of its lethargy and force the environmental issue onto the national political agenda."

I was a college freshman on Earth Day 1970. Even then I had trouble reconciling the few, but highly visible, people who were smashing automobiles, preaching about shutting down steel mills (where I was fortunate to get a job that summer) and arguing private property should be abolished to protect our natural resources from abuse. Having been in 4-H and Boy Scouts, I enjoyed and valued our water, forests, and scenic resources. I still plant a garden each spring.

I had the opportunity to talk with Sen. Nelson several times in 1995, 1997 and 2002, and I consider him an admirable public servant. Somewhere along the line, however, the role and history of Earth Day 1970 took on a life of its own and now has plays a counterproductive role in environmental policy making.

We do not need to mark the anniversary of Earth Day 1970. Celebrating its anniversary reconfirms the myth of the original Earth Day's impact and suggests an overly simplified view of U.S. environmental policy making. Moreover, there is often an "anti-establishment, anti-technology" tenor held over from the first Earth Day to which many citizens object.

A widespread misconception is that Earth Day caused the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act and President Richard Nixon's creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. It is now common for textbooks, academic articles and historical exhibits to repeat these inaccuracies. Professor Jerold Schnoor, editor of Environmental Science & Technology, in the commentary "Earth Day at 40," and The History Channel offer standard historical accounts that overstate the importance of Earth Day's impact on environmental policy making.
The single most glaring incongruent fact at odds with this historical misinterpretation is that President Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act on Jan. 1, 1970, almost four months before Earth Day 1970. Earlier, on May 29, 1969, Nixon established the cabinet-level Environmental Quality Council and devoted a great deal of his State of the Union Address to environmental issues. Weeks before, on Jan. 4, 1970, the Washington Post editorialized that the "environment is now a big issue." Time magazine initiated an "Environment" section of the weekly magazine in August 1969.

Similarly, both congressional environmental legislation and American public opinion were becoming more "environmentalist" well before April 22, 1970. Following the first national water and air pollution control laws (in 1948 and 1955, respectively), Congress established the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission in 1958. That led to enacting landmark legislation such as the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1965 and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 — all well before Earth Day 1970.

Gallup polls show a tripling of the percent of the public selecting "reducing pollution of air and water" as a national problem from 17 percent in 1965 to 53 percent in 1970. Opinion Research Corporation surveys show that the percent of the public viewing air and water pollution as "very serious or somewhat serious" increased from 28 percent to 69 percent for air pollution and 35 percent to 74 percent for water pollution over the same time period.

Getting the history of Earth Day 1970 right contributes to understanding the workings of the American political system. While the myth of Earth Day 1970 may be an effective political mobilization tool, it contributes to the equally widespread view that elected officials are out of touch with public opinion and public problems and only wake up when millions of citizens rally in the streets.

Arbor Day, May Day and the vernal equinox would be suitable replacements for the anniversary of Earth Day. The coming of the spring is worth celebrating. So is the progress the United States has made since World War II in reducing environmental pollution while increasing social equality, increasing the quality of life for senior citizens, increasing population mobility and increasing access to higher education.

We certainly have economic, energy and sustainability challenges to face. Connecting these with April 22, 1970, is needlessly counterproductive and limiting.

Let's move on.