

Guest opinion

## Plain Talk: 51 years later, the Earth still needs our help

*Editor's note: I am happy to share Dave Zweifel's column on the climate, originally published on April 25. Dave is editor emeritus of The Capital Times.*

— Diane Everson, publisher

By Dave Zweifel  
The Capital Times

Can it really be that many years?

I had to ask myself that question as the nation celebrated Earth Day this past Thursday. Fifty-one full years since U.S. Sen. Gaylord Nelson, a favorite son of Wisconsin, energized young people throughout the country to set aside a day to focus everyone's attention on what we were doing to the environment and coming up with answers to change it. It's now morphed into Earth Week to help focus our attention even further.

Frankly, while there has been progress — it's been more than a half-century, after all — we continue to spin our wheels addressing the peril facing the only planet we have.

I still remember Walter Cronkite musing on a CBS news special as the Vietnam War finally came to an end in the '70s what cause young people would now champion in the years ahead. When told that it was likely the environment, he replied, well, who would oppose that?

At it turned out, plenty. Like most of us, he couldn't predict the pushback that would come from vested interests when their bottom lines were threatened by efforts to clean up our smog-filled air and protect our rivers and lakes from pollution. Or stop filling swamps for subdivisions and shopping centers. Or regulate pesticides and herbicides that were poisoning wells and our food.

Indeed, an entire political party still opposes initiatives to begin transferring our reliance on fossil fuels to renewables so that we can make a dent in the amount of carbon that is heating up the planet. Donald Trump's administration spent four years tearing down environmental protections. And Gaylord Nelson's seat in the U.S. Senate is now held by a Republican who denies climate change is real and the warming earth isn't caused by humans at all, but stems from an increase in sun spots that we can do nothing about.

My colleague John Nichols and I wrote about that first Earth Day in our book on the 100-year history of The Capital Times and how the newspaper covered every teach-in, march, rally, clean-up brigade and other organized activity that took place here in Dane County. We were just one of thousands of municipalities and universities around the country that cheered on that first Earth Day, April 22, 1970.

The night before, Nelson came to the UW campus to underscore his vision. He made it clear that our environment is all-encompassing and that a clean Earth is essential for everyone's well being. It's more than just water and air.

"Our goal is an environment of decency, quality and mutual respect for all other human creatures and all living creatures — an environment without ugliness, without ghettos, without discrimination, without hunger, poverty or war. Our environment is a decent environment in the deepest and broadest sense," he told the cheering crowd.

Now 51 years later, as President Joe Biden hosts a climate change summit, the United Nations World Meteorological Organization is warning that the world is facing the abyss.

Increasing temperatures and how they affect climate is going to cause misery and strife for all living creatures unless the United States and other countries come together to create that environment of decency Gaylord Nelson talked about 51 years ago.

We don't have another 51 to go.

Dave Zweifel is editor emeritus of The Capital Times. dzweifel@madison.com, 608-252-6410 and on Twitter @DaveZweifel.



## Note to readers

### Dear Readers

A few items for you this week:

**1. We can all make construction zones safer.** Gov. Tony Evers has proclaimed April 26-30 as Work Zone Safety Awareness Week, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is taking part in a nationwide campaign to spread awareness about safe driving as construction and maintenance activity increases for the spring and summer months. Slow down when you see workers and, if it's possible, provide additional space by moving over. Wisconsin's Move Over Law applies to maintenance operations as well as emergency response units. You can also participate in "Go Orange Day" on Wed., April 28, by wearing orange in support of highway safety. (Tag it #OrangeForSafety) You can visit wisconsindot.gov and search "work zone" for more tips and information.

**2. Mom & Me — Mother's Day Photo Contest.** Look through all your photos and select the cutest, memorable or unusual one you would like to submit of Mom and children. The details will be in next week's Reporter. (We are still getting the details worked out.) The contest will run May 6 - 14. Winners and their local prizes will be published in the May 19 edition.

**3. Madison Children's Museum is reopening.** Madison Children's Museum (MCM) has been closed since March 13, 2020, due to the pandemic. Now conditions are right for a cautious reopening. The museum will begin a phased reopening this June, with changes made to operations to protect the health of visitors and staff. MCM will open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**4. YMCA partners with the Janesville Farmers Market.** The YMCA of Northern Rock County has announced a new partnership with the Janesville Farmer's Market to bring free group fitness opportunities to the Farmers Market every Sat. morning. The Y will offer an hour of group exercise classes and other fitness opportunities in the Town Square West Pavilion on Festival Street beginning at 8 a.m. For more information, or a full list of offered classes, visit the YMCA website.

**5. Edgerton Reporter featured on TVW Talk Wisconsin.** I was interviewed this week by Jessa Jeremiah for Talk Wisconsin. The program will be on TVW, one of WISC-TV channels. It will air on Mon. May 3, 9:00 p.m.; Tues, May 4, 5:30 a.m. Thursday, May 6, 11:30 a.m.; Friday, May 7, 3:30 p.m.; Saturday, May 8, 9:00 p.m.

*We want to produce the best weekly newspaper possible for you. Let me know your ideas.*  
—Diane Everson, publisher

Guest Opinion

## Why reforming the filibuster matters

By Lee H. Hamilton

As Washington turns its attention to infrastructure and other matters of policy, the Senate filibuster isn't commanding quite the same headlines as it did a few weeks back. But that's only because the issue is percolating behind the scenes. At some point, it will return to the limelight.

And when it does, you should understand what's at stake. Because as obscure as it seems, it actually goes to the heart of how we operate as a democracy.

The key point to remember is that a growing number of senators have come to represent a shrinking portion of Americans. Current rules require 60 senators to agree to move a measure forward, with certain exceptions, which means that 41 senators can block most legislation. In theory, senators coming from the 21 smallest states—representing less than 12 percent of the US population—can keep the nation's agenda from moving forward.

It is remarkably easy for the leader of the Senate minority, Republican Mitch McConnell, to muster the 41 votes he needs simply to block legislation from moving forward. It's a silent and powerful parliamentary move: Without Americans as a whole or senators' constituents being any the wiser, bills die without coming up for a vote and there are no fingerprints on the murder weapon.

Now, there's a lot to be said for maintaining rules that slow legislation down and ensure that the majority can't simply get what it wants without negotiating. But the key word is "negotiating"—when the filibuster is used simply to ensure that a president and elected majority can't get a bill considered, it's become something else.

There are options short of outright ending the filibuster, including expanding the breadth of bills that are exempt from the 60-vote requirement to move forward, reducing the 60-vote requirement for certain types of bills, or reviving the requirement that senators intent on blocking legislation actually must get up and talk about it.

The Senate's rules are a big reason we have a Congress that struggles to get things done. I believe wholeheartedly in representative democracy and in not trying to shortcut it or to restrict it. Proposals in front of Congress should be able to get a full debate and an up-or-down vote in which Americans' elected representatives make clear where they stand. The current filibuster allows a small group of them to sidestep all that.

*Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.*



## THE GRAMMAR GUY

by Curtis Honeycutt

### Nonce upon a time

Have you ever heard or uttered a sentence and then thought, "I'll bet no one's ever said that before"? For instance, yesterday I was playing with my daughter, Maeve, who is three-and-a-half. She has some stretchy, colorful toys called Monkey Noodles. Maeve has a vivid imagination, but I'll spare the details of the game she invented only to say the game ended with me exclaiming, "We don't put Monkey Noodles in our mouths after we bake them in our tummy ovens!" I doubt the same words had ever been put together in the same order in the same sentence before, and I doubt they'll ever need to be uttered again.

I think about these kinds of sentences all the time. Do you know that there's a version of this "once-in-a-lifetime" occasion for standalone words? They're called "nonce" words, or "occasionalisms." Nonce words are born when one word gets invented and subsequently utilized one time for one occurrence in one work of writing. These a la carte words are served up once and then they're done forever.

The word "nonce" means "for the once," or "for one purpose." Yes, back in the day, regular people knew what "nonce" meant. James Murray, editor of the 1884 "New English Dictionary on Historical Principles" (which, in later editions, changed its title to the Oxford English Dictionary), coined the term "nonce-word."

Lewis Carroll's 1871 poem "Jabberwocky" includes several nonsensical words that — up until that point — hadn't been invented, let alone used. The poem introduces us to one-time terms including "brillig," "frabjous," "frumious" and "manxome." While I wasn't there when Carroll penned this work, which would later be included in "Through the Looking-Glass," I doubt he intended these nonce words to exist outside the universe of Alice's Wonderland.

Irish author James Joyce came up with words constantly in his writing. In "Ulysses" alone, Joyce coined the words "mrkgnao," "poppysmic," "ringroundabout" and "yogibogey-box." While this makes me want to start (and not finish) reading "Ulysses" again, I find it even more interesting that one of Joyce's nonce words became a "real" word: quark.

As everyone already knows, quarks are subatomic particles that science people consider one of the building blocks for all matter. Physicist Murry Gell-Mann, who discovered quarks in the early 1960s, referred to these tiny particles as "quorks" until he came across the word "quark" in Joyce's book "Finnegan's Wake." From then on, "quark" stuck.

So, a word to writers: unless you're ready for them to take on lives of their own, be careful not to throw nonce words around all zoodle-zazzle.

## Legal News Today



Full text of these legal notices appears on 14 & 15

Town of Fulton Board of Review  
Town of Fulton Notice of Hearing  
Hazeltime Storage Notice of Auction  
City of Edgerton Common Council Minutes  
City of Edgerton Open Book Notice  
Board of Education Minutes

## Open Meetings and Open Records Law

Section 19.31, Wisconsin Statutes

"In recognition of the fact that a representative government of the American type is dependent upon an informed electorate, it is declared to be the public policy of this state that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of those officers and employees who represent them.

Further, providing persons with such information is declared to be an essential function of representative government and an integral part of the routine duties of officers and employees whose responsibility it is to provide such information."

The Edgerton Reporter supports this policy.

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