



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2012

For inquiries or interview requests, please contact:

Andrea Rodgers Harris 206-296-2851

akrodersharris@yahoo.com

Julia Olson 415-786-4825

julia@ourchildrenstrust.org

WASHINGTON YOUTH APPEAL CLIMATE CASE

Washington's State's Supreme Court is asked to Combat the Climate Crisis

Seattle, Washington – Yesterday, seven young petitioners and their guardians filed the opening [brief](#) of their appeal to the Washington Supreme Court. The appeal was filed after a judge in King County Superior Court dismissed their climate change [lawsuit](#) against Governor Gregoire, The Director of the Department of Ecology, the Commissioner of Public Lands, and the Director of the Department of Fish & Wildlife. The lawsuit was brought to force Washington to halt the climate catastrophe and reduce carbon dioxide emissions in order to protect Washington's natural resources as required by the public trust doctrine.

Already, courts in Texas and New Mexico have issued rulings that the atmosphere is a public trust resource in those states. The Washington case is another case in a series of coordinated legal action across the country to compel government action on climate change. One law firm in Houston has called the unprecedented decision in Texas, "a 'shot heard 'round the world' in climate change litigation."

Though the Washington petitioners are young, they have been fighting to protect the environment for many years. Some, like 14-year-old Jacob, spear-headed recycling and green building initiatives at their schools, and others, like 16-year-old Anna, became leaders in environmental organizations, such as the Evergreen Chapter of the National Honor Society. Adora, a member of the iMatter Youth Counsel, works passionately to inspire kids and adults to love learning, writing and thinking, through her desire to know and understand human nature. She's determined to spread her visions and wish for humans to live in peace and harmony with each other and plant Earth.

Their drive for entering the lawsuit also comes from the alarming research of our nation's top scientists. According to leading climate scientist, Dr. James Hansen, "the science is crystal clear—we must rapidly reduce fossil fuel carbon dioxide emissions if we are to have a chance of protecting Earth's natural systems for these young people." Hansen submitted a [declaration](#) supporting the youths' appeal to the Washington Supreme Court in which he states:

“Further delay of meaningful action to address climate change vastly increases the risk of irretrievable damage to the climate system. Delaying action to return the atmospheric CO₂ concentration to approximately 350 ppm by the end of the century may doom the prospect of stabilizing the Earth’s climate system and mitigating human suffering.”

“Our Children will be forced to address unprecedented crises since their government has failed to take meaningful action to protect their interests in the critical natural resources of the state,” says Joyce Svitak, the mother of Adora.

Along with Dr. Hansen’s declaration, one amicus brief was filed in support of the Washington youth. Several faith-based groups submitted an [amicus brief](#) arguing that the inequities of climate change threaten human rights and that international human rights law is applicable in this Atmospheric Trust Litigation (ATL) case. In their brief the groups, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church Faith Action Network, the Pacific Northwest Conference of Christ, The Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Right Reverend Gregory Rickel, VIII Bishop of Olympia, the Episcopal Church in western Washington, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace and Washington Unitarian Universalist Voices for Justice, draw the Court’s attention to “the important link between climate induced rights impacts and the diverse calls of faith-based communities for moral action on climate change.”

Current climate science calls for a return to 350 parts per million carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by the end of the century. To get there, Washington must reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by six percent each year or risk our climate reaching tipping points beyond which there is no return. Each year Washington delays making the necessary reductions, makes it harder to reach 350 in time to save our atmosphere and protect the Washington way of life.

“Time is of the essence. Every day the State kicks the can down the road for future generations to address the climate crisis, it gets more likely that the public trust resources of this State will continue to be impaired to the point of destruction,” says Andrea Rodgers Harris, plaintiffs’ attorney, “The time for the State to act is now, and the public trust doctrine is the source of law that requires the State to act.”

Our Children's Trust is a nonprofit focused on protecting earth’s natural systems for current and future generations. We are supporting youth in the coordinated Atmospheric Trust Litigation effort. We are here to empower youth as they stand up for their lawful inheritance: a healthy planet. We are mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers. We are adults, part of the ruling generation, and we care about the future of our children—and their children's children. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/

iMatter is a youth-led campaign of the nonprofit group, Kids vs Global Warming, that is focused on mobilizing and empowering youth to lead the way to a sustainable and just world. Using multiple platforms at the local, state, and national level, we are committed to raising the voices of the youngest generation to issue a wake-up call to live, lead and govern as if our future matters. www.imattermarch.org/

WITNESS is the global pioneer in the use of video to promote human rights. We empower people to transform personal stories of abuse into powerful tools for justice, promoting public engagement and policy change. In partnership with the iMatter TRUST Campaign we seek to bring visibility to the challenges our youth already face because of the changing climate and call for a massive assault on fossil

fuel emissions. Without an all-out assault, effects will range from drought to disease; from food shortages to tainted water supplies; from the loss of homes due to floods, erosion and fire to massive relocations. The human rights challenge is most succinctly summarized by Mary Robinson, "Climate change will, in short, have immense human consequences." WITNESS partnered on this campaign in hopes that predictions will not become realities. To view the stories from our youth included in the TRUST Series go to www.witness.org/campaigns/all-campaigns/imatter or www.ourchildrenstrust.org.

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