

◆ **Our Children's Trust** ◆ **Kids vs Global Warming** ◆

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Contact: Jennifer Maier, 925-526-5193, info@ourchildrenstrust.org
Julia Olson, 415-786-4825, Julia@ourchildrenstrust.org

iMatter Campaign: Youth Sue Over Detrimental State Agency Decisions in Iowa and Texas to Preserve the Future and Prevent Climate Catastrophe

Eugene, OR — Today, youth in Iowa and Texas are filing lawsuits in state court, seeking judicial review of state agency decisions, which deny administrative petitions to force action on climate change. Specifically, the rulemaking petitions request the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to reduce statewide carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from fossil fuels consistent with what current scientific analysis deems necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change.

“The Texas government has failed to live up to its responsibility to protect my future and take action to halt climate change,” said 15 year-old Texas plaintiff, Eamon Umphress. “My generation will be hurt the most by climate change, but instead of taking action, Texas is putting short-term profits for corporations above a livable planet for me and future generations.”

As part of the iMatter Campaign, the Iowa and Texas petitions for rulemaking were filed in early May in conjunction with legal actions in 47 other states, the District of Columbia, and against the federal government on behalf of youth to compel reductions of CO₂ emissions that will counter the negative impacts of climate change. “The petitions rely upon the long established legal principle of the Public Trust Doctrine that requires all branches of the government to protect and maintain certain shared resources fundamental for human health and survival,” said Jennifer Maier, legal coordinator for Our Children's Trust. “Science, not politics, defines the fiduciary obligation that the government, as the trustee, must fulfill on behalf of the beneficiary—the public.”

“My generation has a profound interest in ensuring that the climate remains stable enough so that we have a livable future,” stressed 13 year-old Iowa plaintiff, Glori Dei Filippone. “I have nightmares about the environmental damage humans are doing to our planet. Youth across the world are standing up to demand change because our leaders are failing us. I joined this legal action to demand my government to stop giving in to political pressures or fears about changing our outdated economy or agricultural system and to take the urgent action needed to guarantee the survival of future generations.”

The Texas decision states that any reduction in CO₂ emissions will not impact the global distribution of these gases in the atmosphere. “But as the largest emitter in the United States, reductions in Texas can make a difference in overall reductions,” said Dr. Neil Carman, Clean Air Director for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. “Every ton of carbon contributes to global warming, and fewer emissions means less heating in the pipeline and a better chance of reversing Earth's current energy imbalance.”

Both Texas and Iowa are currently reeling from severe impacts of climate change. The U.S. Global Change Research Program states in its 2009 report, *Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States*, that with rising high temperatures, extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall, droughts, and heat waves, will become more frequent and severe, and water supplies are projected to become increasingly scarce. Last month, the federal Department of Agriculture declared 213 counties in Texas disaster areas, due to “one of the worst droughts in more than a century,” and stated that many farmers and ranchers “have lost their crops due to the devastation caused by the drought and wildfires.” According to a recent report by the Iowa Climate Change Impacts Committee, “the 2008 floods presented one of the most devastating natural disasters in our state’s history.” Floods are a growing problem in Iowa and “create many health hazards in addition to deaths caused by rising waters.”

To protect Earth’s natural systems, the best available science shows that average global surface heating must not exceed 1° C and concentrations of atmospheric CO₂ must decline to less than 350 ppm this century. We are currently at around 390 ppm. To accomplish this reduction, Dr. James Hansen and other renowned scientists conclude that carbon dioxide emissions need to peak in 2012 and decline by 6% per year starting in 2013. The Iowa and Texas rulemaking petitions seek a rule that would require a reduction of statewide carbon dioxide emissions at these levels. Dr. Hansen’s recent paper is available at:
www.ourchildrenstrust.org/sites/default/files/20110505_CaseForYoungPeople.pdf.

“We have a moral duty to provide our children and our children’s children with a livable planet,” said Victoria Looz, co-founder, with her 16-year-old son Alec, of the non-profit Kids vs Global Warming and the iMatter Campaign. “Our governments must live up to their responsibility to ensure that this happens. We need to live NOW as if our children’s future matters and end our reliance on fossil fuels.”

***Our Children's Trust** is a nonprofit focused on protecting earth’s natural systems for current and future generations. We are here to empower and support 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. We are teens and moms and young activists 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/

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