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Governor Inslee Directs The Washington Department Of Ecology To Take Serious Action On Climate Change

The Gov. Sides With Youth Standing Up For Their Right To A Healthy Future

Seattle, Washington – Today, Gov. Jay Inslee directed the Washington Department of Ecology (“Ecology”) to take serious action on climate change. Inslee said Washingtonians have too much at stake to wait any longer for legislative action, and directed Ecology to step up enforcement of existing state pollution laws and to develop a regulatory cap on carbon emissions.

The Governor’s bold message to Ecology comes less than two weeks after he invited five young petitioners to his office to discuss their climate change concerns and the importance of taking immediate action to combat carbon emissions. The five petitioners are part of a larger group of eight young people who took Ecology to court after the agency denied their petition to promulgate a rule that would limit carbon dioxide emissions in Washington according to what scientists say is needed to protect our oceans and climate system. Gov. Inslee ended the 90-minute meeting with the petitioners making it clear to them that he is taking their requests and their lawsuit seriously, and today he responded to their request that he direct Ecology to initiate a formal rulemaking process.

“We are all really grateful that Governor Inslee took our thoughts seriously and is helping Washington lead the battle against the climate crisis and towards climate stability,” said 14-year-old petitioner Wren Wagenbach.”

Petitioner Gabe Mandell, echoed his friends’ sentiment, “We are very happy that the Governor is stepping up and telling Ecology to step up, too. We hope that Ecology will listen to Gov. Inslee and do their constitutionally mandated job to protect our future.”

In a [statement released today](#), Gov. Inslee said “Carbon pollution and the climate change it causes pose a very real existential threat to our state. Farmers in the Yakima Valley know this. Shellfish growers on the

coast know this. Firefighters battling Eastern Washington blazes know this. And children suffering from asthma know this all too well and are right to question why Washington hasn't acted to protect them."

Last month, in a [landmark decision](#), King County Superior Court Judge Hollis Hill ordered Ecology to reconsider the youth petitioners' climate change petition asking for carbon dioxide reductions based upon best available science. Ecology has until August 7 to report back to court, and Ecology Director Maia Bellon will meet with the petitioners and their attorney on July 29 to discuss possible settlement negotiations. Today, Gov. Inslee asked Ms. Bellon to develop substantive emissions reductions. As they enter the settlement meeting, the remaining question for the petitioners is whether Ecology will base their rulemaking on the best current science as Judge Hill ordered.

"Gov. Inslee's decision to seize this opportunity to lead on climate in response to the youths' court case is truly groundbreaking," said Andrea Rodgers, attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center. "Now, the Department of Ecology must begin the process of creating a rule that limits carbon emissions in the state. We will continue to ask Ecology to follow Judge Hill's guidance in her order to consider the most current science presented by the youths and their experts when we meet at the settlement table tomorrow. These kids deserve all the praise in the world for challenging their elders to manage their future responsibly."

"For four years, youth around the country have been petitioning their governments to make rules that reduce carbon pollution according to what is scientifically necessary to protect their climate system," said Julia Olson, executive director of Our Children's Trust. "Today marks the first time a Governor has ordered a rulemaking to move forward to protect his state's young citizens. More elected officials should follow Gov. Inslee's lead."

The petitioners acted with the help of Our Children's Trust, an Oregon-based nonprofit orchestrating a global, game-changing, youth-driven legal campaign to establish the right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate. The legal effort advances the fundamental duty of government today: to address the climate crisis based on scientific baselines and benchmarks, and to do so within timeframes determined by scientific analysis.

***Our Children's Trust** is a nonprofit organization advocating for urgent emissions reductions on behalf of youth and future generations, who have the most to lose if emissions are not reduced. OCT is spearheading the international human rights and environmental TRUST Campaign to compel governments to safeguard the atmosphere as a "public trust" resource. We use law, film, and media to elevate their compelling voices. Our ultimate goal is for governments to adopt and implement enforceable science-based Climate Recovery Plans with annual emissions reductions to return to an atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration of 350 ppm. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/*

***The Western Environmental Law Center** is a public interest nonprofit law firm. WELC combines legal skills with sound conservation biology and environmental science to address major environmental issues throughout the West. WELC does not charge clients and partners for services, but relies instead on charitable gifts from individuals, families, and foundations to accomplish its mission. <http://www.westernlaw.org>*

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