



For inquiries or interview requests, please contact:

Andrea Rodgers
Julia Olson

206-696-2851
415-786-4825

rodgers@westernlaw.org
julia@ourchildrenstrust.org

Governor Inslee Hosts Washington Youth Petitioners To Discuss Their Climate Case Against The Department of Ecology

Seattle, Washington – On Friday, five young petitioners and their attorney arrived at Gov. Inslee’s office, but before entering the building they were met by a security guard who told them “sorry, but kids aren’t allowed in this building.” For these petitioners, the guard’s words came as no surprise. They are part of a larger group of eight young people who took the Washington Department of Ecology (“Ecology”) to court after Ecology 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.

The petitioners, aged 11-15, are fully aware that they don’t have a vote in the political system and are often denied a seat at the table, but they’re also aware that they have to live with the consequences of how the ruling generation tackles – or ignores – climate change. That’s why they’re working hard to get the state to take action today – to protect their world for tomorrow.

Fortunately, the young petitioners who arrived at his office in downtown Seattle on Friday had a personal invitation from the governor and were allowed into the building. Gov. Inslee hosted the petitioners graciously, and they experienced a high-level forum to talk about their greatest concerns for the future, the undeniable climate science that says current levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide are unsafe, and why they think Ecology should promulgate a rule to reduce emissions according to the scientific standards that will truly protect their future. 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 wants to do everything he can do to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Washington, and will respond to their request that he direct Ecology to initiate a formal rulemaking process.

“Gov. Inslee was really accepting and thoughtful and was really excited to work with us in the near future,” said 14-year-old petitioner Wren Wagenbach. “We frequently aren’t taken seriously. People don’t really value our opinions because we are young, but Gov. Inslee and his staff were so excited to hear our opinions and were impressed with all the work we have been doing.”

“It was clear in the meeting that Gov. Inslee respects what these youths have to say about climate change,” said Andrea Rodgers, the Western Environmental Law Center attorney representing the petitioners. “These kids have demonstrated tremendous leadership and courage by taking their

government to court and we hope that Gov. Inslee will recognize that the law and the science demand urgent action by Ecology to regulate carbon dioxide emissions. The time to act is now — the governor will never again have an opportunity like this to lead the state and the world toward science-based climate recovery.”

Last month, in a [landmark decision](#), King County Superior Court Judge Hollis Hill ordered Ecology to reconsider the youths’ climate change petition asking for carbon dioxide reductions based upon best available science. Ecology has until August 7 to report back to court.

The youth petitioners are supported by leading climate scientist Dr. James Hansen, who advises them on the scientific basis for their case. Dr. Hansen has found that atmospheric carbon dioxide levels must be reduced from the current global concentration of 401 parts per million (ppm), to 350 ppm by 2100 in order to achieve climate stabilization and to protect our oceans from catastrophic acidification.

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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