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Contacts:

Julia Olson, 415-786-4825, julia@ourchildrenstrust.org

Philip Gregory, 650-697-6000, pgregory@cpmlegal.com

To set up interviews with youth plaintiffs, contact:

Meg Ward, 503-341-8590, meg@ourchildrenstrust.org

Youth Seek Answers from the Oil Industry in Climate Case

Request seeks to shine light on role of oil and gas industry in government decisions that led to climate change

Today, youth plaintiffs in *Juliana v. United States* released a copy of their request for documents sent to American Petroleum Institute (API), an intervenor-defendant in their constitutional climate case. The request seeks to establish a factual record of the role that the oil and gas industry played in government decisions over the past 50 years that led to climate change. API is the largest U.S. trade group for the oil and gas industry and counts ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, and other major oil companies as members. The document request is a part of the discovery process in preparation for trial, currently expected to take place next fall.

As one example, plaintiffs' [request](#) seeks information about the Global Climate Coalition, of which intervenor-defendant API and intervenor-defendant National Association of Manufacturers were active members. The Global Climate Coalition is known to have promoted climate denial and has a record of attempting to dissuade national and international efforts to combat climate change. The request for documents also asks API for communications with the George W. Bush White House regarding its climate science and policy work.

Materials sought from API are intended to fill in the gaps left by the fossil fuel industry's [answer](#) to youth plaintiffs' allegations filed with the court. The fossil fuel industry claimed a "lack of sufficient knowledge to admit or deny" over 75% of the factual allegations in the plaintiffs' complaint. Yet, intervenors only had to look to the publicly available information, acknowledged by the United States government in its answer, to respond to portions of the youths' complaint.

In the words of Judge Thomas Coffin during an in-court [case management conference](#) on February 7:

“The government has admitted that, yes, climate change is a reality and that, yes, it’s induced by human activity, and they admit that CO2 right now is at a level of 400 parts per million, which. . . is the highest level in millions of years.”

When asked by the judge if the fossil fuel industry agreed, they answered “. . .we don’t know, and on that basis we deny.”

Plaintiffs are pressing for documents from API that will provide the court with an accurate record of the industry’s actions, and given plaintiff’s discovery rights in federal court, they are very likely to uncover the truth. Evidence, such as documents found by [Inside Climate News](#) showing internal knowledge of projected growth of CO2 emissions by Exxon, a leading API member, suggests that API knew a lot more about climate change, its likely impacts, and government policies that consistently failed to deal with it than it has thus far admitted in court.

“I look forward to reading these documents, which will expose API’s deliberate suppression of climate science,” said **Alex Loznak, 20-year-old plaintiff and Columbia University undergrad**. “The API’s secrets will tell the shocking story of an industry bent on destabilizing the planet’s climate system, hand-in-hand with corrupt government officials.”

“The truth will come out in this case,” said **Julia Olson, counsel for plaintiffs and executive director of Our Children’s Trust**. “We intend to hold the defendants accountable for their longstanding role in causing climate change, and their clear knowledge about the price the planet would pay for the sake of their profits.”

Juliana v. United States is one of many related legal actions brought by youth in several states and countries, all supported by Our Children’s Trust, seeking science-based action by governments to stabilize the climate system.

Counsel for Plaintiffs include Philip L. Gregory, Esq. of Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy of Burlingame, CA, Daniel M. Galpern Esq. and Julia Olson, Esq. of Eugene, OR.

Our Children’s Trust is a nonprofit organization, elevating the voice of youth, those with most to lose, to secure the legal right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate on behalf of present and future generations. We lead a coordinated global human rights and environmental justice campaign to implement enforceable science-based Climate Recovery Plans that will return atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration to below 350 ppm by the year 2100. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/

Earth Guardians is a Colorado-based nonprofit organization with youth chapters on five continents, and multiple groups in the United States with thousands of members working together to protect the Earth, the water, the air, and the atmosphere, creating healthy sustainable communities globally. We inspire and empower young leaders, families, schools, organizations, cities, and government officials to make positive change locally, nationally, and globally to address the critical state of the Earth. www.earthguardians.org

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