



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**FOLLOWING DENIAL OF CLIMATE RULEMAKING PETITION,
ALASKAN YOUTH TAKE GOVERNOR WALKER TO COURT**

Anchorage -- Alleging that the state is violating their constitutional rights by putting fossil fuel production above the safety of their lives, 16 young Alaskans filed a constitutional climate change lawsuit against the State of Alaska, Governor Bill Walker, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Larry Hartig, and five state agencies today. Attorneys representing the youth filed the case, *Sinnok v. Alaska*, in the Superior Court for the State of Alaska Third Judicial District at Anchorage.

The youth filed the [lawsuit](#) after the Alaska DEC, headed by Hartig, issued a [denial](#) of the climate change rulemaking [petition](#) they filed in August. That petition had called on the Alaska DEC to reduce CO₂ emissions according to the best available climate science, inventory substantial sources of GHG emissions, and adopt a Climate Action Plan.

In Alaska DEC's denial of the petition, among other reasons, agency Hartig stated:

“The extent of emission reductions proposed in the petition would have significant consequences for employment, resource development, power generation, health, culture, and other economic and social interests within the state.”

Esau Sinnok, 19 year old plaintiff from Shishmaref said:

“Climate change is already harming, and threatens the very existence of my home village of Shishmaref and my native culture. Because of climate change, the island where my ancestors have lived for over 4,000 years is being eroded away into the sea. My children might not be able to see what life on Shishmaref once was. It's time Alaska stop

promoting fossil fuels at the expense of young people and start protecting our rights to a stable climate system.”

Sebastien Kurland, 18 year old plaintiff from Juneau said:

“Climate change is causing irreversible damage to the Alaskan environment and its people. The government is more focused on immediate revenue from the fossil fuel industry than on the long-term welfare of the state and its population, and that needs to change. As young adults, we hold great stake in the sustainability of Alaska’s invaluable environment and resources. This is our home to protect, our place to bring and raise our families; we deserve the same beauty and riches as the generations before us.”

Linnea Lentfer, 13 year old plaintiff from Gustavus said:

“I have been fortunate to grow up in Southeast Alaska; an incredibly wild and beautiful place, and a place on the front lines of climate change. We are filing this case to preserve our unique lifestyle for our peers, and the next generation. We are asking the state to integrate climate science into their policy and preserve our health, lifestyle, and culture.”

Brad De Noble, co-counsel for youth plaintiffs, said:

“To our Alaska youth and those that follow, climate change is the biggest threat to their future, the life that they see slipping away, and the life to which they are entitled. To see our state government, which has known for decades of the immense impacts of climate change to Alaska, not only do nothing to curb greenhouse gas emissions, but to actively promote, permit, and license activities in Alaska that greatly increase greenhouse gas emissions is egregious. The state government’s actions and inactions violate the constitutional rights of my clients who come from across Alaska and we are going to court to protect those rights.”

Andrew Welle, co-counsel for youth and Our Children’s Trust staff attorney, said:

“Alaska is on the front lines of climate change and these youth are already being profoundly harmed. Despite knowing for decades of the dangers to these youth’s futures, their state government continues to indiscriminately authorize, permit, and encourage activities that create dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and cause climate change, with no regard for the consequences. The government’s denial of the youths’ climate rulemaking petition is further confirmation of their commitment to this dangerous path. By causing and contributing to the climate crisis, the Alaskan government is violating the rights of these youth under the Alaska Constitution. We are confident that the Alaskan courts will vindicate their rights to life, liberty, property, to a stable climate, to equal protection of the law, and their rights under the public trust doctrine.”

The Alaskan youth are calling on the court to protect their constitutional rights by ordering the defendants to prepare a plan to reduce Alaska’s emissions in line with a science-based prescription to stabilize the climate system.

They filed their case as their peers from across the country - 21 young people - hope to head to trial against the federal government, and the Trump Administration in a District Court in Oregon in *Juliana v. United States*.

Sinnok v. Alaska is one of many related legal actions supported by Our Children's Trust, and brought by youth in several states and countries, including [*Juliana v. United States*](#), seeking science-based action by governments to secure a safe climate and healthy atmosphere for present and future generations. #youthvgov

Counsel for Plaintiffs include Andrew Welle, Esq. of Eugene, OR and Brad De Noble, Esq. of Eagle River, AK.

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.

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