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13 Young People File Constitutional Climate Lawsuit Against Governor Inslee and the the State of Washington

Seattle, Washington -- Today, 13 young people from across the state of Washington filed a constitutional climate lawsuit against against the state, Governor Jay Inslee, and several state agencies in King County Superior Court. The [complaint](#) asserts that in causing climate change, the state of Washington has violated the youngest generation's constitutional rights to life, liberty, property, and equal protection of the law, and has caused impairment of essential public trust resources.

The youth filed the case, *Aji P. v. State of Washington*, because the state of Washington is violating their constitutional rights by perpetuating an energy and transportation system that is dependent upon fossil fuels. The case follows up on historic victories secured by young people in the case of *Foster v. Ecology*, which ultimately led to the adoption of Washington's Clean Air Rule. In spite of the *Foster* court's 2015 recognition that "the scientific evidence is clear that the current rates of reduction mandated by Washington law cannot achieve GHG reductions necessary to protect our environment and to ensure the survival of an environment in which [Youth] can grow to adulthood safely," the state of Washington continues to pursue policies that cause dangerous levels of GHG emissions and harm the rights of young people.

Upon filing the complaint, the youth sent a [letter](#) to Governor Inslee, through the Attorney General's office, to express their hope and willingness to work with him to secure a stable climate system for young people and future generations of Washingtonians.

Aji Piper, 17-year-old plaintiff from Seattle and one of 21 plaintiffs in the landmark climate lawsuit *Juliana v. United States*, said:

“I feel hopeful because of this lawsuit, like grass tips emerging from thawing snow. This is my state government’s chance to rise up and take responsibility for their actions. This is also a chance for my government to use real science in the policy they create. This lawsuit gives the Washington state government a chance to take the lead and commit to the citizens it serves and the lives it must protect. So yeah, I’m a little hopeful!”

Andrea Rodgers, counsel for plaintiffs and senior staff attorney at **Our Children’s Trust** said:

“As we celebrate President’s Day this year, it is important to remember the words of President James Madison, who 200 years ago said that ‘the atmosphere is the breath of life. Deprived of it, they all equally perish.’ These 13 young people are brave to be going to court to breathe life into Madison’s words to protect their fundamental constitutional rights to a stable climate system.”

Kailani S., 13-year old plaintiff from Spokane said:

“As a Native American, my whole culture revolves around the natural world. Its survival depends on it. Climate change is impacting my ability to continue participating in my family’s traditions - things like salmon fishing, digging camas roots and picking berries for food. Our land is being destroyed by climate change. I wish I could do more to help, but I’m just one person. I’m simply calling on the state of Washington to do its job to protect my future, my culture’s future, and generations to come.”

India B., 16-year-old plaintiff who lives on her family farm in Cle Elum, said:

“Having lived in Cle Elum my whole life, I have seen climate change take effect over the course of 15 years. This lawsuit that we’re filing should open the Washington government’s eyes to the fact that they have to do more than tell the public that we need to use cleaner energy. *They* need to stop causing climate change and use clean energy.”

Due to the actions the defendants have taken to exacerbate the climate crisis and delay meaningful science-based action, plaintiffs seek an injunction compelling the defendants to develop and implement a comprehensive Climate Recovery Plan targeted to achieving Washington’s obligation to stabilize the climate system and protect the vital natural resources on which plaintiffs and future generations will depend on. Experts working on behalf of the plaintiffs have found that it is feasible to transition all of Washington’s energy systems (for electricity, transportation, heating/cooling, and industry) to a 100% renewable portfolio to achieve a 96% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, in line with what scientists say is necessary to stabilize the climate system.

Adonis Piper, 12-year-old plaintiff from Seattle, said:

“My generation should not have to be involved in this case. It should not be a necessity that we sue the Washington state government to ensure that we get a strong climate ruling that promises that we will have a future with breathable air, drinkable water, and arable farmland. A rule backed

by science not money. This case is us youth, and the adults supporting us, demanding that our voices be heard, that our rights be ensured, that our futures be protected.”

On Monday, February 19, several of the youth plaintiffs along with Andrea Rodgers will join young people from across the state on the Capitol steps in Olympia to demand that the Washington state legislature take bold action on climate now. Youth plaintiffs will be available for interviews between 9 am and 10 am on the steps of the Capitol.

The trial date for *Aji P. v. State of Washington* is set for February 19, 2019.

The young plaintiffs, who range in age from 7 to 17, are supported by Our Children’s Trust, the nonprofit that supports legal actions across the world, including the landmark lawsuit against the United States, *Juliana v. US*, that seek science-based action by governments to secure a safe climate and healthy atmosphere for all present and future generations.

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

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