



For Immediate Release:

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Youth Take Constitutional Climate Lawsuit to the Alaska Supreme Court

Anchorage, Alaska -- Today, 16 young Alaskans filed their [notice of appeal](#) with the Alaska Supreme Court in their constitutional climate lawsuit, *Sinnok v. State of Alaska*. The appeal comes just six days after the release of the Fourth National Climate Assessment, which reports in its [Alaska chapter](#) that climate change is already dangerously impacting the state.

On October 30, Superior Court Judge Gregory Miller for the Third Judicial District in Anchorage granted the State of Alaska's motion to dismiss the youths' case. The court concluded that plaintiffs did not point to any policy of the state that has contributed to climate change. For the court to address plaintiffs' claims, the court said, would be to create policy "in the first instance." The court ruled that plaintiffs' claims can only be addressed by Alaska's political branches - the defendants in the case.

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

"We're quickly approaching tipping points after which climate harms become irreversible and catastrophic, threatening the lives and futures of Alaska's youth. Alaska's political branches have made clear that the State will continue to promote fossil fuels regardless of these dangers. If these dire circumstances don't justify a check by the judicial branch, our constitutional guarantees provide empty promises. These youth plaintiffs have shown tremendous courage in bringing this case and it's time for our courts to show courage and confront their duty to address these claims. We're confident that Alaska's Supreme Court will put this case back on track."

In their complaint, the youth plaintiffs alleged that, despite longstanding knowledge of the dangers of climate change, the State of Alaska has adopted and implemented an energy policy that violates their constitutional rights. The State, the plaintiffs claim, is actively causing and contributing to climate change and putting fossil fuel production above the safety of their lives. The youth pointed to, among other actions and policy statements, a state law recognizing concerns about climate change while simultaneously declaring that it is Alaska's energy policy to promote fossil fuels.

The 16 youth plaintiffs asked the court to order the State to prepare and implement a plan to reduce Alaska's greenhouse gas emissions by rates necessary to avert catastrophic climate change and protect their futures.

In the appeal, the youth argue, among other things, that the Superior Court mistakenly concluded they did not show that Alaska has adopted an energy policy that contributes to climate change. The young plaintiffs also contend that Alaska's courts have a duty to check the constitutional violations of the political branches in adopting and implementing that policy.

Jode Sparks, 18-year-old plaintiff from Sterling, said:

“The changing climate is a threat to my world and my life. Each passing day means more suffering and less time to fix our world. Our elected officials have proven that they are committed to policies and actions that are digging us deeper into the problem. This trial is vital to correcting our current course. I hope that the courts will fulfill their constitutional duty of checking and balancing our misguided policy makers.”

Lizka Besseney, 18-year-old plaintiff from Anchorage, said:

“Scientists have been saying for years that the situation is dire. Even with conclusive evidence that within all of our lifetimes we will not only feel but be harmed by the effects of climate change, when we - my generation and the youth of Alaska - try to do something to save our home and our world, we don't even get the chance to be heard.”

Brian Conwell, 19-year-old plaintiff from Unalaska, said:

“The youth of Alaska deserve to go to trial in this case. The fact of the matter is that some of our hometowns are literally falling into the sea. Where I live in Unalaska, the seafood industry is the lifeblood of my community and it is mortally threatened by our government's actions regarding climate change. Science tells us that storms will get more severe, ecosystems will be thrown out of whack, and human industry will change. I don't understand why the current administration thinks this isn't grounds for a lawsuit.”

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.

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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