



For Immediate Release:

June 5, 2019

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Thousands Rally in Support of the Young Americans Behind *Juliana v. United States* on Tuesday

Supporters in Portland, Oregon rallied in solidarity with youth plaintiffs during pivotal hearing in landmark constitutional climate lawsuit

Portland, Oregon - Yesterday, thousands of supporters showed up to demonstrate in support of the 21 youth plaintiffs in the constitutional climate lawsuit, *Juliana v. United States*. The case was heard yesterday by a three-judge panel in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The landmark lawsuit, filed by 21 young Americans in 2015 with the support of Our Children's Trust, has faced a string of extraordinary requests from the United States government to stop the case from going to trial, most recently by an interlocutory, or "early" appeal. Yesterday, the *Juliana* 21 sat in the largest courtroom in the Mark O. Hatfield U.S. District Courthouse as their attorney, Julia Olson fought for their right to be heard and present their evidence in court at trial.

Julia Olson, executive director and chief legal counsel of **Our Children's Trust** and co-counsel for the youth plaintiffs, said at the close of her argument:

"If we look back on the 20th century, we can see that race and sex discrimination were the constitutional questions of that era, and when our great-grandchildren look back on the 21st century, they will see that government sanctioned climate destruction was the constitutional issue of this century. We must be a nation that applies the rule of law to harmful government conduct that threatens the lives of our children so that they can grow up safe and free, and pursue their happiness. That is what the founders intended."

Hundreds of youth filled both the courtroom and the overflow room in the Mark O. Hatfield Courthouse, where the hearing had been moved to accommodate the public. All ages of supporters also gathered at a park in downtown Portland to watch the livestream on a jumbo-screen during a rally. These supporters joined thousands around the world who also watched the livestream as part of the Our Children's Trust

campaign #AllEyesOnJuliana, making this the first appellate hearing in American history to be livestreamed at such a scale.

Strategic Communications Director for Price of Oil and Oil Change U.S., David Turnbull, tweeted from the rally: “If you’ve never watched a live-streamed court hearing about the future of humanity with hundreds of your neighbors, standing in solidarity with amazing young people fighting for their futures, you haven’t lived. #AllEyesOnJuliana #youthvgov.”

The judges asked attorneys for both sides a range of questions that focused on one core issue: What is the proper role of the judiciary in a constitutional case about climate change? Olson argued the court has a duty under the Constitution to hear cases involving affirmative government conduct that harms children and deprives them of their bedrock fundamental rights, like their right to life, personal security, and family autonomy. Jeffrey Clark, for the government, argued that the court should return to the days of the Westminster courts and only hear cases that could have been brought then, when slavery was legal, women were property of their husbands, and children property of their fathers. The court will ultimately decide whether plaintiffs can challenge the constitutionality of the national fossil fuel energy system and the policies and practices that implement that system and are a significant cause of climate change.

When the hearing came to a close, the *Juliana* plaintiffs and their legal team marched from the courthouse to the rally with their supporters, where the rest of the crowd was waiting for them. They took the stage to huge applause and a sea of turquoise and blue banners that read “The Government Knew”, and “Let the Youth Be Heard.”

Philip Gregory, co-counsel for the youth plaintiffs, stated at the press conference:

“I believe that there will be climate justice — it will be swift and it will be sure. There is so much at stake here and our courts are necessary to protect the lives and futures of these plaintiffs, our children, our grandchildren and future generations. We have the constitutional right to life, personal security and a stable climate capable of sustaining human life. That is what this court will find, and that is how we all prevail.”

Vic Barrett, 20-year-old plaintiff from White Plains, New York said to his supporters from the stage:

“We’re learning every day that we’re the ones that must secure our future.”

Levi D., 11-year-old plaintiff from Satellite Beach, Florida said:

“I have a long time left to deal with the consequences of climate change. How am I supposed to enjoy life, liberty, and property if, one day, the island that I live on will be underwater?”

In the coming weeks or months, the court will decide whether the 21 plaintiffs will go to trial against the Trump administration. While the plaintiffs wait for a decision from the court, Our Children’s Trust is rolling out a campaign for plaintiffs’ supporters with one ask: call on their representatives in Congress to publicly endorse the *Juliana* claims against the government, and the constitutional right to a climate system that sustains life. Influential Members of Congress have already supported the lawsuit, including Senators Sanders (I -VT.), Whitehouse (D-RI), Merkley (D-OR), and Markey (D-OR), and Representatives Grijalva (D-NM), DeFazio (D-OR), Tlaib (D-MI), and Blumenauer (D-OR).

Juliana v. United States is not about the government's failure to act on climate. Instead, these young plaintiffs between the ages of 11 and 23, assert that the U.S. government, through its *affirmative actions* in creating a national energy system that causes climate change, is depriving them of their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property, and has failed to protect essential public trust resources. The case is one of many related legal actions brought by youth in several states and countries, all supported by Our Children's Trust, and all seeking science-based action by governments to stabilize the climate system.

Counsel for Plaintiffs are Julia Olson, Esq. of Eugene, OR, Philip L. Gregory, Esq. of Gregory Law Group of Redwood City, CA, and Andrea Rodgers, Esq. of Seattle, WA.

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. 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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