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Members of Congress Support *Juliana v. U.S.* Youth Plaintiffs After Judge Rules Children's Constitutional Climate Case Can Proceed to Trial

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Members of the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives expressed their support for the fundamental rights of children to a safe climate and the young Americans in the landmark children's constitutional climate case, [*Juliana v. United States*](#). On June 1, 2023, U.S. District Court Judge Ann Aiken, of the U.S. District Court in Oregon, [granted](#) the young plaintiffs' motion to amend their complaint, putting their case back on track to trial.

The 21 youth plaintiffs, including 11 Black, Brown, and Indigenous youth, have waited almost eight years after facing incessant and unprecedented efforts by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to delay and dismiss their case. The *Juliana* case was one of the most significant targets of the Trump administration's "shadow docket" - a tactic wherein cases are decided without full briefing or oral argument, and without any written opinion. Now, barring continued attempts by the DOJ to delay the case, the youth will finally be able to move forward to trial on the question of whether the federal government's fossil fuel-based energy system, and resulting climate destabilization, is unconstitutional.

Members of Congress stand in solidarity with the *Juliana* youth plaintiffs. Following the ruling, members of Congress issued public statements of support for the youth plaintiffs and this week participated in a Tweetstorm to continue to show their commitment to the youth, their rights to a safe, livable climate, and their right to go to trial. Supporting access to justice for our children, the members [encourage](#) the Biden administration to fulfill his promise to work with our youth and protect them from the harms of the climate crisis.

Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Chairman of the Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee and Chairman of the Chemical Safety, Waste Management, Environmental Justice, and Regulatory Oversight Environment and Public Works Subcommittee, shared, "BIG NEWS: The [#YouthVGov](#) case will finally proceed to trial! This

remarkable group of young people who are demanding their right to a healthy planet and future have my full support.” Read his June 3, 2023, tweet [here](#) and June 6, 2023, tweet [here](#).

“Twenty-one youth have waited almost eight years to get a ruling on their lawsuit demanding their constitutional right to a safe climate be protected. And yesterday, we welcomed news that they are finally being granted their right to go to trial,” said **Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-09)**, a Chief Deputy Whip and Ranking Member on the House Innovation, Data, and Commerce Energy and Commerce Subcommittee. “These young people have taken on incredible responsibility to protect our environment. I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to support them as they continue their fight to protect the right of all to a safe and habitable climate. Our children and grandchildren should not have to fear for the future of their environment and our world as we know it.” Read her June 2, 2023, press statement [here](#) and tweet [here](#).

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Chairman of the Budget Committee, Chairman of the Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, & Federal Rights Judiciary Subcommittee, and member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, stated, “All of us have a responsibility to leave the next generation a healthy and hospitable planet. The window of opportunity to address climate change is still open, but we must follow the lead of our children and grandchildren to take action today. I’m proud to stand alongside Our Children’s Trust and young people across this country as we fight for a safer climate future.” He also tweeted his support on June 6, 2023, [here](#).

“Today, I’m proudly standing with [@youthgov](#) + Juliana plaintiffs as they fight to protect their constitutional right to a safe climate. Let’s get climate justice out of the shadows & off the shadow docket,” stated **Congresswoman Veronica Escobar (TX-16)**, member of the Judiciary Committee and Deputy Whip of Congressional Progressive Caucus. Read her June 6, 2023, tweet [here](#).

For additional statements of support, including from Senator [Wyden](#) and Congressmembers [Jayapal](#) and [Tlaib](#), visit the [Juliana statements of support page](#).

“I spent most of my life living on a barrier island impacted by the climate crisis and nearly half of my life fighting for climate justice as a plaintiff in this lawsuit,” **said the youngest plaintiff in the Juliana case, 15-year-old Floridian Levi Draheim**. “I’m only 15 years old and I have lived through three major hurricanes and have been evacuated from my home multiple times. I’ve also experienced years of delay, waiting for my right to be heard in court, due to the actions of our own DOJ. I’m excited that our case is finally moving forward and grateful that members of Congress continue to support children’s fundamental rights for youth, like me and my little sister.” Learn more about Levi and the other 20 *Juliana* plaintiffs [here](#).

Since the case was filed in 2015, more than 85 lawmakers have rallied behind the *Juliana* youth and their right to a safe climate. They joined U.S. Senate and House [letters](#) in November [2021](#) to President Biden expressing support for the fundamental rights of children to a safe climate.

Members stood with the *Juliana* plaintiffs by cosponsoring the Children’s Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution introduced during the 116th and 117th Congress ([S.Con.Res.8](#) & [H.Con.Res.31](#)) expressing that the current climate crisis disproportionately affects the health, economic opportunity, and fundamental rights of children, and demands that the United States develop a national, comprehensive, science-based, and just climate recovery plan to meet necessary emissions reduction targets. They also signed on to [two](#) 2019 and 2020 [amicus briefs](#) filed in the Ninth Circuit.

“These young people have a right to access their courts and, after several long years, finally have their evidence of climate harm caused by their own government—and how to stop it—heard in open court,” said Julia Olson, lead counsel for the youth plaintiffs. “Attorney General Garland should treat this like the urgent constitutional case that it is by litigating the case on its merits and presenting their arguments in the light of day at trial, rather than once again seeking to push this case into the dark corners of the shadow docket. Members of Congress who continue to stand in solidarity with these 21 young Americans are sending a clear and urgent message to all of our nation’s leaders to protect our children’s fundamental rights to a safe climate.”

Plaintiffs intend to seek a prompt trial date so that they and their experts can finally present their evidence of their government’s active infringement of their constitutional rights.

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Our Children’s Trust is the world’s only nonprofit public interest law firm that exclusively provides strategic, campaign based legal services to youth from diverse backgrounds to secure their legal rights to a safe climate. We work to protect the Earth’s climate system for present and future generations by representing young people in global legal efforts to secure their binding and enforceable legal rights to a healthy atmosphere and safe climate, based on the best available science. Globally, we support youth-led climate cases in front of national courts, regional human rights courts, and UN bodies. www.ourchildrenstrust.org