



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2013

For inquiries or interview requests, please contact:

Jennifer Marlow, Three Degrees, 503-413-9524

Faith Groups Support Youth Appellants' Federal Climate Change Case

Washington, D.C. – Today, [Three Degrees Warmer](#), a climate justice project based in Washington State, helped six faith-based groups file an *amicus curiae* (“friend of the court”) brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit to support young people suing the federal government for not acting to reverse climate change. Late last month, attorneys for five youth appellants and two non-profits filed their opening brief in the D.C. Circuit court arguing that they have a constitutional right to the benefits of a protected atmosphere and a safe climate system.

As relief, the youth appellants seek a comprehensive federal Climate Recovery Plan, which would reduce U.S. emissions based on the prescription that Dr. James Hansen and other leading international climate scientists say will restore our atmosphere to 350 parts per million (ppm) by the end of the century.

The youths’ lawsuit was filed with the help of [Our Children’s Trust](#), an Oregon-based non-profit orchestrating a game-changing, youth-driven legal campaign in the United States and across the world. The case relies upon the long-established principle of the public trust doctrine, which requires all branches of government to protect and maintain certain commonly shared resources fundamental for human health and survival.

The faith groups are six diverse organizations: Interfaith Moral Action on Climate, Interfaith Power and Light, The Green Zionist Alliance, The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Northeast Community Leadership Team and The Sisters of Mercy Northeast Justice Council, all of which serve vulnerable communities across the United States and call for moral action to reverse climate change.

“These groups offer a unique perspective to the Court grounded in moral values common to faith traditions from around the world,” said Jen Marlow, Director of Three Degrees Warmer. “In order for the U.S. government to meet its human rights obligations in a warming world, the government has a legal and moral obligation to protect the atmosphere.”

In advocating for the D.C. Circuit to rule in favor of the youth, the faith groups write to the court:

“[T]hat the greater impacts of the Court’s decision will fall most heavily upon the members of our society who, for social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural reasons are the most disadvantaged by climate threats and whose human rights to life,

health, and property are most at risk from climate change should the Court determine the U.S. Constitution does not require protection of the atmosphere or that the atmosphere is outside the scope of the public trust.”

They cite numerous provisions of international human rights law to show that a healthy atmosphere is a “prerequisite for protecting human rights,” emphasizing that the young and vulnerable populations will be hurt most by the U.S. government’s failure to act urgently to reduce carbon emissions.

"The devastation of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines underscores our support for this brief," said Sister Patricia McDermott, president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, an order of nearly 4,000 women religious in the U.S., Philippines, Guam, the Caribbean and Central and South America. "We hear the cries of those most impacted by climate change around the world, and are compelled to respond out of Catholic teachings on the dignity of life and our deep commitment to Earth and to persons who are poor and vulnerable, especially women and children."

This *amicus curiae* brief is one of seven briefs filed today, on behalf of youth. The faith groups are joined by leading climate scientists, law scholars, national security experts, government leaders, NGOs, and amici representing native communities.

Read the brief [here](#).

Learn More:

Short documentary films of the young plaintiffs can be seen at www.OurChildrensTrust.org or www.facebook.com/TRUSTCampaign.

[Three Degrees Warmer](#)

[Sisters of Mercy](#)