

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Youth Turn to All Three Branches of the Federal Government to Protect Their Generation from Runaway Climate Change**

**Washington, D.C.** – Last week seven youth from five US states exercised their constitutional rights by visiting all three branches of government, calling for action against climate change on behalf of the entire youngest generation. These youth leaders are part of the iMatter Campaign, and are all plaintiffs in lawsuits against Federal and State Governments, for failing to protect the atmosphere as a public trust. Alec Loorz, 17 year old founder of iMatter and Kids vs Global Warming and lead plaintiff in the federal lawsuit commented that, “Our generation has no political rights; we can’t vote, we can’t compete with corporate lobbyists... so when our government fails to act with our survival in mind, we must take matters into our own hands. That is what we are doing today.”

The iMatter delegation included Alec Loorz (17) from Ventura, California; Xiuhtezcatl Martinez (12) from Boulder, Colorado; Glori Dei Filippone (13) from Des Moines, Iowa; Garrett Serrels (16) and Grant Serrels, (16) from Harrisonburg, Virginia; Eshe Sherley (18) and Rebecca Parks (17) from Boston, Massachusetts. From the halls of Congress, to the White House, and ending with a court hearing for their federal lawsuit, the youth leaders issued a passionate plea for their government to take action to solve climate change, which they believe to be the most urgent crisis of our time. These youth are among the hundreds in the iMatter Movement who have held marches in their communities, initiated projects to reduce carbon emissions in their homes and schools, educated others about these issues, and taken steps in their own lives to reduce their carbon footprints. However, they feel these small-scale actions are not enough to stop the looming crisis of climate change. They believe this crisis calls for large-scale systemic change.

In partnership with Progressive Democrats of America, these young people were able to meet with over 15 members of Congress to gather support for their mission and their legal action. In a meeting with the 78-member Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Representatives formally endorsed the youth mission, issuing the following statement of support; “We go on record to support the youngest generation of Americans fighting for their future, rather than the fossil fuel companies who are fighting for profits.”

Climate Act, a carbon fee on which will dramatically reduce emissions in line with what they are asking from their legal action.

After a full two days of Congressional meetings that would exhaust even the most seasoned lobbyist, the young people made their way to the White House Office of Public Engagement. “We need the full support of our government to put climate recovery actions into place, because climate change puts our future at risk,” said Grant Serrels, one of the youth plaintiffs, referring to a letter which was hand delivered to President Obama last week. The letter urges the president to direct the Department of Justice to listen to the youth and their team of scientific advisors—headed by leading climate scientist Dr. James Hansen—and prepare a comprehensive National Climate Recovery Plan, rather than waste taxpayer resources fighting them in the courts.

And then the hearing proceeded on Friday. After a short rally outside the U.S. District Courthouse, youth and supporters completely filled the courtroom. The potential landmark case filed one year ago, *Alec L. v. Jackson, D.D.C., No. 11-CV-022235, 12/14/11*, seeks an order requiring the Federal government to immediately conduct a detailed accounting of our nation’s carbon emissions and develop and implement a national climate recovery plan to protect our nation’s atmosphere.

Last month, Judge Robert Wilkins allowed the National Association of Manufacturers and five other industry groups to intervene in the lawsuit. The rationale behind the intervention is that the remedy sought by plaintiffs would adversely affect their members’ profits, and as such they filed a Motion to Dismiss. On the other hand, in the words of lead plaintiff Alec Loorz, “Yes, we have had many technological advancements because of fossil fuels, I am grateful for that. But, unfortunately for all of us, our current lifestyle is unsustainable and threatens the rights of our generation to grow up in a healthy and balanced planet. And our government has the legal responsibility to protect our atmosphere under the Public Trust Doctrine, which is fundamental to the US constitution.”

Attorneys for NAM and other defendants did not argue the science behind the crisis, nor did they argue to defend their clients’ profits. For this hearing, they claimed that this large of a problem should be handled by Congress, and not the courts. But, as the Plaintiffs’ Attorneys argued, when Congress has not taken steps to address an emergency situation in the nation, it is appropriate to ask the courts to compel a solution. Just as federal desegregation of Southern states was compelled by the courts, plaintiffs hope this case will give the Obama Administration the opportunity to push through immediate action to protect our atmosphere.

The crisis looms over the resolution of these foundational questions of human rights, obligation of protection, the Constitution, and the inter-play between branches of government and state vs federal domain. In the meantime, iMatter youth, and the hundreds of thousands who are standing with them in solidarity, are holding their breath, waiting for a favorable decision from Judge Wilkins.

stands for something much larger. We, the youngest generation, are refusing to sit idly by as our future is gambled away. We are demanding that our government begin to value our survival just as much as profits and power... and, once and for all, to govern as if our future mattered.”

*iMatter is a youth-led campaign of the nonprofit group, Kids vs Global Warming, that is focused on mobilizing and empowering youth to lead the way to a sustainable and just world. Using multiple platforms at the local, state, and national level, we are committed to raising the voices of the youngest generation to issue a wake-up call to live, lead and govern as if our future matters. [www.imattermarch.org/](http://www.imattermarch.org/)*

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