

Youths suing to push government on climate change

By PHUONG LE
Associated Press



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

In this photo taken Oct. 28, teenage environmental activists Aji Piper, left, 15, Lara Fain, 13, Gabriel Mandell, 13, and Wren Wagenbach, 14, playfully pose for a photo after a rally they spoke at in Seattle. The four are among eight youth activists who petitioned Washington state last year to adopt stricter science-based regulations to protect them against climate change.

is melting. Ocean is acidifying. The Earth is warming. Everything that can go wrong is going wrong, and we need to fix it."

Mandell and other youths represented by the Western Environmental Law Center argue that Washington state has failed to reduce carbon emissions based on the best available science. They say the government has violated its duties under the state constitution and the legal principle called the public trust doctrine, which requires the government to protect shared resources.

The state said in court documents that the Washington Department of Ecology department was working on adopting a rule to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

"Climate change is the most important environmental problem," said Stu Clark, Washington's air

quality program manager. "We need to do whatever we can. We are doing what we can with what we have."

Nationwide, the cases need to pass certain legal hurdles, such as establishing that the public trust doctrine applies to the Earth's atmosphere or that the children have standing to sue. The cases have cleared some hurdles but not all, said Gerrard, the professor.

"I don't think this litigation is going to be successful because climate change is a global problem, and it's not clear what a state could do," added Richard Stewart, a law professor at New York University. "A state could do certain things, but it can only make an infinitesimal contribution" to a global problem.

In Oregon, two Eugene teens are appealing after a state judge rejected their petition in May. The judge ruled that Oregon's public

trust doctrine does not apply to the atmosphere, water, beaches and shorelines.

In August, 21 youths across the country sued the federal government, alleging that approval of fossil fuel development has violated the fundamental right of citizens to be free from government actions that harm life, liberty and property.

The EPA did not comment on specifics of the lawsuit but said in a statement that President Barack Obama and the agency have been taking action to "give our kids and grandkids the cleaner, safer future they deserve."

Aji Piper, 15, a Seattle high school sophomore, is a plaintiff in that case and the one in Washington state.

"The government isn't doing the best to assure that we have the best quality of life," he said. "It holds more urgency for us. Our future is at hand."

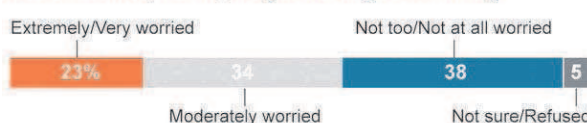
Climate change concerns

While most Americans believe global warming is a reality, fewer than 1 in 4 say they are very worried about it, according to an AP-NORC poll.

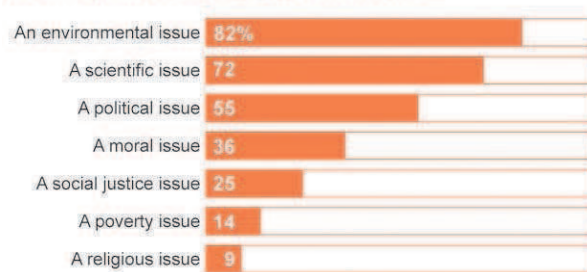
Percentage who believe global warming is happening:



Q: How worried, if at all, are you about global warming?



Percentage who described global warming as ...



NOTE: Results based on survey of 1,058 U.S. adults Oct. 15-18. Margin of error is ± 3.7 percentage points.

SOURCE: AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

AP

As scientists worry, U.S. public doesn't

WASHINGTON (AP)—Americans are hot but not too bothered by global warming.

Most Americans know the climate is changing, but they say they are just not that worried about it, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. And that is keeping the American public from demanding and getting the changes that are necessary to prevent global warming from reaching a crisis, according to climate and social scientists.

As top-level international negotiations to try to limit greenhouse gas emissions start later this month in Paris, the AP-NORC poll taken in mid-October shows about two out of three Americans accept global warming and the vast majority of those say human activities are at least part of the cause.

However, fewer than one in four Americans are extremely or very worried about it, according to the poll of 1,058 people. About one out of three Americans are moderately worried and the highest percentage of those polled — 38 percent — were not too worried or not at all worried.

BRIEFLY

Taiwan, Chinese presidents to meet for first time since 1949

BEIJING (AP) — China confirmed Wednesday that President Xi Jinping will meet this weekend with Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou in a historic first culminating nearly eight years of quickly improved relations between the two sides.

News of the meeting Saturday in Singapore from the Chinese Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office came hours after the Taiwanese side announced the meeting earlier Wednesday.

The two would be meeting in their capacity as "leaders of the two sides" of the Taiwan Strait, office director Zhang Zhijun was quoted as saying in a news release posted on the office's website.

That appeared to afford them equal status, possibly an effort to blunt criticism from the pro-independence opposition in Taiwan who accuse Ma's Nationalist Party of pandering to China's ruling Communists. Presidents of the

two sides have not met since Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists lost the Chinese civil war to Mao Zedong's Communists and the Nationalists rebased in Taiwan 100 miles away in 1949. The two sides have been separately ruled since then with Taiwan evolving into a freewheeling democracy.

China insists that the two sides eventually reunite, by force if necessary.

Germany's VW: New CO2 problems with 800,000 vehicles

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's Volkswagen, already reeling from the fallout of cheating on U.S. emissions tests for nitrogen oxide, said Tuesday that an internal investigation has revealed "unexplained inconsistencies" in the carbon dioxide emissions from 800,000 of its vehicles — a development it said could cost the company another \$2.2 billion.

The investigation was undertaken by the company after the revelations that

many of its vehicles had software that allowed them to deceive U.S. nitrogen oxide tests. CEO Matthias Mueller promised Tuesday that Volkswagen "will relentlessly and completely clarify what has happened."

The news is the latest in a string of problems identified with Volkswagen emissions, which have caused share prices to plummet.

In September, the company admitted it had installed software designed to defeat tests for nitrogen oxide emissions for four-cylinder diesel engines on 11 million cars worldwide, including almost 500,000 in the U.S. It has already set aside \$7.4 billion to cover the costs of recalling those vehicles — and analysts expect the emissions scandal to cost the company much more than that.

UN refugee chief: funding shortage triggered Europe arrivals

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The combined resources of U.N. agencies, the Red Cross and

humanitarian organizations are no longer enough to protect the 60 million people displaced by war and persecution around the world, the U.N. refugee chief said Tuesday.

Governments, private citizens, corporations and foundations have provided the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees with a record \$3.3 billion last year, Antonio Guterres told the General Assembly's human rights committee. Yet humanitarian budgets aren't enough "to cover even the bare minimum, and we are starting to see what happens as a result of that," he said.

Guterres said "the trigger" for the mass arrival of Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans and Eritreans in the eastern Mediterranean this year "is

the humanitarian funding shortfall."

He also cited two longer-term trends: After years in exile most of the four million Syrian refugees in neighboring countries have depleted their savings and lost hope of a political solution to end the nearly five-year conflict.

Currently, Guterres said, 70 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are living in "extreme poverty" and 86 percent in urban areas of Jordan are living below the poverty line.

Takata fined \$70 million over exploding air bags

DETROIT (AP) — U.S. auto safety regulators

fined Japan's Takata Corp. \$70 million Tuesday for concealing evidence for years that its air bags are prone to explode with grisly consequences — a defect linked to eight deaths and more than 100 injuries.

Under an agreement with the government, Takata will phase out manufacture of air bag inflators that use ammonium nitrate, the propellant blamed for the explosions. It also agreed to a schedule over the next two years for replacing many of the devices already in use.

And unless it can prove they are safe, Takata may have to recall all its inflators, even those not yet implicated in the mess.

The company admitted that it knew for years that the inflators were defective.

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