

Supreme Court To Hear Major Greenhouse Gas Case

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Reporting by Brianne Goodspeed

The U.S. Supreme Court announced on Monday that it will decide whether the EPA is required to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions or whether measures to control emissions will remain voluntary. Attorneys general from twelve states and lawyers from several cities and environmental groups filed the suit against the EPA, arguing that under the Clean Air Act the agency is obligated to regulate the greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

The EPA counters that the Clean Air Act does not grant them that authorization and that scientific evidence about global warming is not conclusive enough to merit such action anyway. The suit follows a lower court ruling in favor of the EPA. The Bush administration also sides with the EPA, supporting voluntary measures that it claims would be less harmful to the U.S. economy. During the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush claimed to support regulations on greenhouse gas emissions, but reversed his stance after taking office.

The states that have filed the suit against the EPA include California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington. California and several of the northeastern states have legislation to curb emissions that could be at risk if the court decides against them. Additionally, Baltimore, New York City, Washington, D.C., the Pacific islands of America Samoa, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the Union of Concerned Scientists are involved.

Observers expect the court to hear the case in October, and hope a ruling will come down by next June.

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