Nos. 21-2728, 22-1096

IN THE

United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

CITY OF HOBOKEN,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v

CHEVRON CORPORATION, et al.,

Defendants-Appellants.

On Appeal from an Order of the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey (20-cv-14243)

STATE OF DELAWARE, ex rel. KATHLEEN JENNINGS, ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

BP AMERICA INC., et al.,

Defendants-Appellants.

On Appeal from an Order of the United States District Court for the District of Delaware (20-cv-1429)

MOTION TO STAY THE MANDATES

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INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 41(d)(1), Defendants-Appellants respectfully move this Court to stay issuance of the mandates pending the filing and disposition of a timely petition for a writ of certiorari with the Supreme Court of the United States. A stay is warranted because there is good cause for a stay and Defendants-Appellants' petition for a writ of certiorari will raise a substantial question that has divided the circuits: whether defendants may remove nominally statelaw claims that are necessarily and exclusively governed by federal law by virtue of our constitutional structure. The panel in this case answered in the negative and thereby deepened an entrenched circuit split and created significant tension with longstanding Supreme Court precedent.

Absent a stay, these two cases may be remanded to two different States' court systems, requiring Defendants-Appellants to litigate Plaintiffs-Appellees' claims simultaneously in separate jurisdictions and under two sets of state law. The potential harm to the parties and the interests of judicial efficiency constitute good cause that amply justifies a stay of the mandate. Plaintiffs-Appellees oppose this motion.

BACKGROUND

Plaintiffs-Appellees filed two separate actions against a total of 28 energy companies and a national trade association in New Jersey and Delaware state courts, seeking to use state law to impose tort liability for past and future harms allegedly attributable to global climate change. See 2-Hoboken-JA-69-79. Plaintiffs-Appellees allege that "Defendants['] actions were, at the very least, a substantial factor in the creation of the [alleged] nuisance" because "Defendants have produced more than 12% of the world's fossil fuels since 1965, the combustion of which has been the driving force behind" climate change, and "[w]ithout Defendants' actions, climate change effects" would be "much less severe." 2-Hoboken-JA-164. Asserting numerous putative claims under New Jersey and Delaware state law, including for public nuisance and trespass, Plaintiffs-Appellees demand compensatory and punitive damages, disgorgement of profits, abatement of the alleged nuisances, and other relief. 2-Hoboken-JA-184–85.

Defendants-Appellants removed these actions to the District of New Jersey and the District of Delaware, asserting several grounds for federal jurisdiction, including the federal officer removal statute, 28

U.S.C. § 1442, and federal question jurisdiction based on federal common law, 3-*Hoboken*-JA-188; 2-*Delaware*-JA-89. The district courts issued orders remanding the cases to state court. 1-*Hoboken*-JA-15; 1-*Delaware*-JA-59.

On consolidated appeal, the panel affirmed the district courts' remand orders. Op.19–20. Defendants-Appellants filed a petition for rehearing en banc on September 14, 2022. *Hoboken* Dkt. 141. On September 30, 2022, the Court denied Defendants-Appellants' petition. *Hoboken* Dkt. 142. Absent a stay, the mandate will issue on October 7, 2022. Fed. R. App. P. 41(b).

ARGUMENT

This Court may stay the mandate when a petition for a writ of certiorari "would present a substantial question and . . . there is good cause for a stay." Fed. R. App. P. 41(d)(1). Here, Defendants-Appellants' forthcoming petition for a writ of certiorari will raise a substantial question over which the courts of appeals are divided. And given the considerable harm that will befall Defendants-Appellants if they are mistakenly forced to litigate these cases in separate state-court systems, as well as

the burden and inefficiencies that the litigation would unnecessarily impose on the New Jersey and Delaware state courts, good cause exists for a stay. *See Nara v. Frank*, 494 F.3d 1132, 1133 (3d Cir. 2007) ("In a close case, the movant should make a showing that, on balance, the interests of the parties and the public favor a stay.").

I. Defendants-Appellants' Petition Will Present A Substantial Question.

Defendants-Appellants' petition for a writ of certiorari will present the question whether defendants can remove to federal court nominally state-law claims that, because of our constitutional structure, are necessarily and exclusively governed by federal law alone.

The panel's decision affirming the remand orders expressly conflicts with holdings of other courts of appeals that have recognized that federal common law provides a ground for federal removal jurisdiction even if the claims were nominally pleaded under state law. See Op.24–25 (acknowledging conflict with Sam L. Majors Jewelers v. ABX, Inc., 117 F.3d 922, 926 (5th Cir. 1997), and declining to follow it); see also, e.g., In re Otter Tail Power Co., 116 F.3d 1207, 1213–14 (8th Cir. 1997); Republic of Philippines v. Marcos, 806 F.2d 344, 352–54 (2d Cir. 1986); Torres v.

S. Peru Copper Corp., 113 F.3d 540, 542–43 (5th Cir. 1997); Newton v. Capital Assurance Co., 245 F.3d 1306, 1309 (11th Cir. 2001).

Under the law of these circuits, Plaintiffs-Appellees' claims would be removable. As the Second Circuit recently explained, purported statelaw claims seeking damages for the cumulative impact of global greenhouse-gas emissions from every State in the nation and every country in the world are necessarily and exclusively governed by federal law. City of New York v. Chevron Corp., 993 F.3d 81 (2d Cir. 2021). This is because claims centered on transboundary emissions "demand the existence of federal common law" because they span state and even national boundaries, and "a federal rule of decision is necessary to protect uniquely federal interests." Id. at 90. In that case, the Second Circuit held that New York City's "sprawling" claims, which—like Plaintiffs-Appellees' sought "damages for the cumulative impact of conduct occurring simultaneously across just about every jurisdiction on the planet," were "simply beyond the limits of state law" and thus necessarily were "federal claims" that "must be brought under federal common law." Id. at 92, 95.

The same is true of Plaintiffs-Appellees' claims. Plaintiffs-Appellees seek damages for harms allegedly resulting from the cumulative use

of all fossil-fuel products worldwide, which Plaintiffs-Appellees assert contributed to global climate change, leading to rising sea levels, more frequent extreme heat, and increased extreme precipitation, which in turn caused their alleged physical injuries. 2-Hoboken-JA-69–79. These claims are necessarily governed exclusively by federal law, see City of New York, 993 F.3d at 92–95, and are therefore removable, see, e.g., Sam L. Majors Jewelers, 117 F.3d at 926. The conflict between those precedents and the panel's decision alone demonstrates that there is a considerable likelihood that the Supreme Court will grant certiorari. See Sup. Ct. R. 10(a) ("the reasons the Court considers" in granting review include whether "a United States court of appeals has entered a decision in conflict with the decision of another United States court of appeals").

A stay is also warranted because the Supreme Court has not yet addressed this recurring and important issue, and the approach followed

While the Supreme Court declined to consider similar issues in City of Oakland v. BP PLC, 969 F.3d 895 (9th Cir. 2020), cert. denied, 141 S. Ct. 2776 (2021), three additional courts of appeals have issued decisions since that case was decided, further deepening the split. See Rhode Island v. Shell Oil Prods. Co., 35 F.4th 44, 53–56 (1st Cir. 2022); Mayor & City Council of Baltimore v. BP P.L.C., 31 F.4th 178, 202 (4th Cir. 2022); Bd. of Cnty. Comm'rs of Boulder Cnty. v. Suncor Energy (U.S.A.) Inc., 25 F.4th 1238, 1257–63 (10th Cir. 2022).

by the panel is in clear tension with the logic of the Supreme Court's decisions in cases involving interstate and international emissions. See Sup. Ct. R. 10(c) (noting that review may be proper where "a United States court of appeals has decided an important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court, or has decided an important federal question in a way that conflicts with relevant decisions of this Court"). The Supreme Court has long held that, as a matter of constitutional structure, claims hinging on interstate and international emissions are governed by federal law. "[T]he basic scheme of the Constitution . . . demands" that "federal common law" govern disputes involving "air and water in their ambient or interstate aspects," including claims based on interstate and international emissions. Am. Elec. Power Co. v. Connecticut, 564 U.S. 410, 421 (2011); see also Illinois v. City of *Milwaukee*, 406 U.S. 91, 105 n.6 (1972) ("*Milwaukee I*") (noting that the "basic interests of federalism . . . demand[]" this result).

As a result, the Court has made clear that "our federal system does not permit [a] controversy [of this sort] to be resolved under state law." Tex. Indus., Inc. v. Radcliff Materials, Inc., 451 U.S. 630, 641 (1981). Indeed, "state law cannot be used" at all. City of Milwaukee v. Illinois, 451

U.S. 304, 313 n.7 (1981) ("Milwaukee II"). Rather, the "rule of decision [must] be[] federal," and the claims thus necessarily "arise[] under federal law." Milwaukee I, 406 U.S. at 100, 108 n.10 (internal quotation marks omitted).

Because the panel's decision conflicts with the decisions of other courts of appeals and is in tension with decisions of the Supreme Court, Defendants-Appellants' petition will present a substantial question that is ripe for Supreme Court review and for which there is a reasonable likelihood of reversal.

II. There Is Good Cause To Stay The Mandates.

There is also "good cause for a stay" here. Fed. R. App. P. 41(d)(1). Absent a stay of the mandates, these actions could be remanded to multiple state courts for further proceedings while the Supreme Court considers Defendants-Appellants' petition for a writ of certiorari. Congress has bestowed on defendants the right to litigate in federal court "actions that originally could have been filed in federal court." Caterpillar Inc. v. Williams, 482 U.S. 386, 392 (1987). Without a stay of the mandates, Defendants-Appellants could be deprived of that right, even if they later prevail before the Supreme Court.

Moreover, Defendants-Appellants could be forced to litigate these claims in two different state-court systems, which could entail resolving numerous threshold and dispositive motions, as well as potentially extensive discovery—all under two separate bodies of state law. If the mandate issues and the Supreme Court ultimately reverses the panel's decision, this litigation will have proceeded in those state courts in the wrong forums and under the wrong laws—requiring the parties and the courts to start over from scratch once the cases are returned to federal court. A stay therefore serves the interests of judicial economy, as there is no need to proceed in state court until the question of federal jurisdiction has been finally resolved.

Finally, Plaintiffs-Appellees will not suffer harm as a result of the stay. Plaintiffs-Appellees claim that they do not seek to enjoin any of Defendants-Appellants' conduct; rather, they ask only for monetary relief. See 1-Hoboken-JA-17 (Hoboken is "seek[ing] compensation to offset the costs it has and will continue to incur to protect itself from the effects of global warming"); 5-Hoboken-JA-748 n.1 ("To the extent there is any ambiguity, Plaintiff disclaims expressly any intent to seek an injunction 'against Defendants' production of oil and gas."); 1-Delaware-JA-31 n.4

("The Court, thus, understands that Plaintiff seeks no injunctive relief 'directed at [D]efendants' forward-looking activities in any way." (alteration in original)). That Plaintiffs-Appellees' alleged entitlement to money damages could be modestly delayed is the antithesis of irreparable harm.

For this reason, other courts considering substantially similar climate-change cases have routinely stayed the mandate. Recently, the Ninth Circuit stayed the mandate under almost identical circumstances. See Order, Cnty. of San Mateo v. Chevron Corp., No. 18-15499 (9th Cir. June 30, 2022), Dkt. 329. And Delaware's counsel expressly consented to a stay pending the conclusion of any Supreme Court proceedings in yet another similar climate-change action in the Northern District of California. See Pac. Coast Fed'n of Fishermen's Ass'ns, Inc. v. Chevron Corp., No. 3:18-cv-7477 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 2, 2019), Dkt. 91, at 3 ("[T]he Parties jointly request that the Court stay further proceedings in this action until" the San Mateo and Oakland appeals "are finally resolved, including resolution of any en banc proceedings in the Ninth Circuit or proceedings in the United States Supreme Court.").

Because a stay of the mandates will not harm Plaintiffs-Appellees, whereas issuance of the mandates would threaten to impose substantial burdens and hardships not only for Defendants-Appellants but also for state and federal court dockets, there is "good cause" to stay the mandates.

CONCLUSION

This Court should stay issuance of the mandates pending the filing and disposition of a timely petition for a writ of certiorari.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on September 30, 2022, an electronic copy of

the foregoing Motion for Defendants-Appellants was filed with the Clerk

of Court for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit us-

ing the appellate CM/ECF system, and that service on the following Fil-

ing Users will be accomplished by the appellate CM/ECF system.

Date: September 30, 2022

/s/ Theodore J. Boutrous, Jr.
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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

1. This motion complies with the type-volume limitation of Fed-

eral Rule of Appellate Procedure 27(d) because it contains 2,026 words,

as determined by the word-count function of Microsoft Word 2010, ex-

cluding the parts of the motion exempted by Federal Rule of Appellate

Procedure 27(a)(2)(B).

2. This Motion complies with the typeface requirements of Fed-

eral Rule of Appellate Procedure 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements

of Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 32(a)(6) because it has been pre-

pared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Microsoft Word 2010 in

14-point New Century Schoolbook font.

Date: September 30, 2022

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