



## In the Hot Seat: Climate Change Law is an Exciting and Growing Practice Area

By Mandy Willingham

In recent months, the hot-button issue of global warming has fueled growing debate among countless media figures, political pundits, and activist groups. In addition to serving as the source of highly charged conversations, this subject is emerging as the basis for an exciting and expanding practice area in the legal sector.

In his article published in March 2007 in publications like *The New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*, writer Barnaby J. Feder said the issue of climate change “seems well on its way to becoming the next big thing in environmental law.”

The growing practice area of global warming has attorneys increasingly involved in litigation. The 2006 report “Global Warming in the Courts,” published by the Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute and the Georgetown University Law Center, cites the growing number of state and federal lawsuits involving such climate change-related subjects as greenhouse gas emissions, the Clean Air Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

In addition, attorneys with keen understandings of business and environmental law are helping to sort the emerging legal issues associated with growing investment in renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, and the developing business of carbon credits. Other topics covered by the growing practice area include rising sea levels, vehicle fuel-efficiency standards, ocean acidification, and land use.

Increasing numbers of law schools are also offering in-depth courses on the numerous and often complex laws and legal issues surrounding climate change. Harvard Law School, the University of Michigan Law School, Stanford Law School, the University of California-Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law, and the Syracuse University College of Law are just a few of the law schools that feature climate change/global warming law courses.

National groups like the American Bar Association are addressing the role of the legal profession with regard to the subject of climate change, as well. The ABA’s Standing Committee on Environmental Law holds an annual National Spring Conference on the Environment. As this year’s theme is “Global Warming: How the Law Can Best Address Climate Change,” speakers will discuss the most effective and productive ways attorneys can approach the issue of climate change.

Undoubtedly, the debate over climate change will continue, while the prospects of finding solutions to the many problems surrounding the issue remain uncertain. In response to the challenges presented by global warming, the demand for attorneys with expertise on issues related to the subject is sure to grow.