



Take the latest, science-backed climate policies that are gaining traction in state houses around the country — and then do the exact opposite. That seems to be the Florida playbook for dealing with the climate crisis facing Floridians in the form of rising sea levels and deadly temperatures.

This legislative session, state lawmakers in the Sunshine State focused on erasing climate change from their laws, killing offshore wind, and banning local heat protection ordinances that are meant to keep people safe in the hottest state in the nation.

Last year, residents of Miami suffered through 46 straight days of the heat index topping 100 degrees while coastal waters rose to jacuzzi temperatures. The only thing worse than a wet heat is being governed by climate change deniers in a wet heat. If signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis, these bills would ensure that Florida is indeed the capital of climate denial in the U.S.

No Heat Protection

Last July, a 29-year-old farmworker named Efraín López García died while working outdoors in record-breaking heat. It's the kind of anecdote that often pushes policymakers into

action.

Instead, Florida lawmakers have passed a bill that strips local governments of the ability to protect workers from extreme heat fueled by climate change. The bill, [SB 1492](#), removes local governments' authority to adopt heat protections, such as guaranteed shade and rest breaks for workers.

On extremely hot days, many outdoor workers in Florida often lack access to three basic accommodations: water, shade and rest breaks, according to [Health News Florida](#). At least one other agricultural worker has died in the last year from heat-related issues in South Florida, and heat kills an average of 34 people a year and hospitalizes hundreds more in Miami-Dade County, the Associated Press has reported.

For years, workers-rights groups have urged local and state government leaders to enact heat safety protections for people who work outside. Miami-Dade County commissioners were on the verge of considering new rules for local agriculture and construction businesses, for example. The new state legislation would make such an effort null and void.

This could be a sign of things to come if other conservative states ban local ordinances meant to protect residents from climate-related health risks. In June 2023, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed HB 2127 — known as the Texas Regulatory Consistency Act — which bars cities and counties from passing regulations that are stricter than state ones. It also overturns local rules such as ordinances in Austin and Dallas that mandated rest breaks for construction workers. California, Oregon and Washington meanwhile have passed state laws that formally protect outdoor workers from the dangers of heat. (Though [indoor heat protections](#) have proved trickier recently.)

But it's not just heat denial. There are other bills passed by the Florida Legislature that threaten to derail broader climate efforts.

War on Wind and “Climate Change”

The state that gave us “Don't Say Gay” is now leaning into “don't say climate change.”

Senate Bill [1624](#), by Sen. Jay Collin, and House Bill [1645](#), by Rep. Bobby Payne, rewrite Florida energy policy to eliminate state goals to address the impacts of climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as erase mentions of climate change. HB 1645 prohibits offshore wind, empowering state officials to “bring an action for injunctive relief against any person who constructs or expands an offshore wind energy facility or a

wind turbine in this state.” It also aims to remove from current law the recognition that “implementation of alternative energy can be a source of new jobs and employment opportunities for many Floridians.” Talk about sticking your head in the sand.

SB 1624 would strike eight references to climate change in current state laws, leaving just seven references untouched, [according to the Tampa Bay Times](#). In some instances, the bill would repeal entire sections of existing law that mention climate, including sections devoted to a grant program that helps school districts and local municipalities reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

These bills have been criticized by environmentalists not just for trying to silence the conversation about solutions to the climate crisis, but also because they could discourage green infrastructure projects and increase the reliance on natural gas and other fossil fuels.

Some in Florida aren’t taking this lying down, however. Advocates with the Farmworkers Association and other groups are [still organizing around heat protections](#) despite the new ban.

There’s also a growing effort in Florida to gather enough signatures on a petition to qualify a constitutional green amendment for the ballot in 2026. Supporters of that kind of constitutional right “to clean and healthy waters” [fell short](#) of the signatures needed for 2024 but say they are [motivated and already organizing for 2026](#). These Floridians hope to follow in the footsteps of Montana, Pennsylvania, and New York which have passed green amendments. Passing such a constitutional guarantee could, in theory, make it harder for state officials to ignore climate science and emissions reductions goals when setting policy. Ten other states this year are considering green amendments, [as I wrote about recently here](#), but these Florida activists are looking to bypass the Legislature altogether.

Swamp Politics

Florida’s recent legislation is a backwards approach to climate policy.

The Republicans who control Florida state government have actually long recognized some of the *symptoms* of climate change and acted on them, believe it or not. In the past, they’ve responded with more than [\\$640 million](#) for resilience projects to adapt to coastal threats. Now, there’s money for addressing problems with [water quality](#), including Everglades restoration. There’s [legislation](#) for buying up endangered land and improving the state’s wildlife and land management programs. [Research by the Emmett Institute](#) shows that Florida leads the way when it comes to real estate risk disclosures about sea level rise. So,

the Republican supermajority in Florida knows the problem. They just don't want to be seen doing anything to address the root cause.

“Why would you address the symptoms and not the cause?” That’s what Yoca Ardití-Rocha, head of the nonprofit CLEO Institute, told [Grist](#). “Fundamentally, I think it’s political maneuvering that enables them [Republicans] to continue to set themselves apart from the opposite party.”

Here’s how you know that it’s all political maneuvering. If the Florida approach to climate change and the environment was a winning one, they could try to prove it by competing in the marketplace of ideas. But they’re not.

Governors in blue states have been laying out ambitious climate plans as a way to compete for federal funds in the form of Climate Pollution Reduction Grants, part of the Inflation Reduction Act, to be doled out by the Environmental Protection Agency. Four red states — most notably Florida — have [refused](#) to apply for the climate money. Gov. DeSantis is leaving money on the table without even trying to make the case for Florida’s conservative approach to climate resilience. And lawmakers are erasing the words “climate change” even [as surveys found](#) that a huge majority of Floridians recognize climate change (90%) and most (69%) support more government action.

If the states are laboratories of democracy, then when it comes to climate policy, Florida is an experiment gone wrong.