



Gov. Newsom with local officials and environmentalists at the end of last session.

It's remarkable that with everything else that's raging, climate and energy bills still managed to dominate the legislative session that just wrapped in Sacramento. After all, the reason lawmakers were still at work this past Saturday — the day after the legislative session was supposed to end — was that negotiations on climate bills pushed them into overtime.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, Senator Pro Tem McGuire, and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas reached last-minute agreement on a package of half-a-dozen climate-related measures. "California is delivering real and lasting energy savings for families, workers and businesses," the Big 3 announced.

The truth is messier, of course. These include bills to reauthorize the state's cap-and-trade program to stay on track toward long-standing climate goals, but also to allow Kern County to expand oil drilling. "While Newsom and Rivas were largely aligned on tempering the state's ambitious climate goals amid the reality of rising costs, McGuire and his staff were wary of handing wins to polluting industries without extracting victories for environmental and social justice causes," **Maya Miller, Alejandro Lazo** and **Jeanne Kuang** [report](#) for CalMatters.

Climate policy people seem *mostly* satisfied, if not exactly happy, with the measures that passed. “Relieved” might be the word. Relieved that it wasn’t worse. Let’s recap how we got here.

Back in December, my UCLA Emmett Institute colleague **Julia Stein** [predicted](#) that “affordability” would dominate the conversation in Sacramento and outlined how climate measures are also pocketbook issues. At the time, many lawmakers were geared up to start talking about cap-and-trade reauthorization framed as both a climate and affordability issue. Then the January fires ravaged Los Angeles. The issue of rebuilding understandably sucked up all of the oxygen. Overhauling CEQA became the focus. The conversation changed again when we started seeing headlines about two California oil refineries preparing to shut down. Even a distant threat of higher gas prices in California can dominate headlines. By August, legislators returned to the subject of cap-and-trade, with just weeks left in the session. Negotiations on such a condensed timeline made it hard to grapple with some of the more radical and complex proposals to modify the program. It probably also disadvantaged environmental justice advocates who have spent years organizing in California but were largely [relegated](#) to the backseat. In the end, California reauthorized its signature climate program until 2045 with some notable new improvements to boot, as my UCLA colleague **Jason Gray** explains [here](#).

Given the deregulation onslaught in 2025, that’s enough to leave climate policy people feeling relieved. “They have, collectively, found a way to get to yes on a whole series of energy legislation that taken individually would represent a massive accomplishment,” Stanford’s **Michael Wara** [skeeted](#). Several environmental groups praised the cap-and-trade reauthorization while also criticizing expanded oil drilling allowances as a sellout to fossil fuel companies. “Removing environmental safeguards won’t reverse the terminal decline of California oil production but it will allow the industry to do more damage on its way out the door,” **Hollin Kretzmann**, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity said. My UCLA colleague **Mary Nichols** [told](#) the LA Times that the negotiated measure does seek to fend off companies looking to take advantage of *offshore* oil in federal waters under the oil-friendly Trump administration.

By contrast, what do Republican lawmakers in Washington have to show for themselves on energy? A lot of executive orders but not legislation. This morning, the House Energy and Commerce Committee is [holding hearings](#) on various GOP bills. They include efforts to let fossil gas projects bypass more cost-efficient wind and solar developments; to “codify an industry definition for showerheads” of all things; and to try to restrict local and state government’s authority. This at a time when American household power bills [have risen](#) 10% since Trump entered the White House and the administration has spent months [trying](#)

[to destroy](#) much-needed energy projects. Energy Secretary Chris Wright [admitted](#) last month that rising energy prices could be a political challenge for the GOP ahead of next year's midterm elections. However, a [new Heatmap Pro poll](#) of registered voters finds that Americans are more likely to blame rising energy prices on their state government and local utility than on the federal government. Voters want to see local action.

What we can say for certain about California is that legislators are at least wrestling with the messiness of the energy transition and confronting the increasing costs of climate-fueled disasters on electricity and insurance. And that shows from this vacillating legislative session.

**Here are some of the notable bills headed to Newsom's desk:**

- [AB 1207](#) - Reauthorizes a Cap-and-Invest program along with the related [SB 840](#) - which directs how the money from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund will be spent.
- [SB 237](#) - Eases rules to [increase the state's oil production](#) and tightens other rules to prevent oil spills.
- [SB 254](#) - Doubles the state's wildfire liability fund to cover wildfire damage and finance mitigation efforts while looking to accelerate clean energy.
- [AB 39](#) - Requires local governments to [adopt](#) electrification plans.
- [AB 825](#) - Establishes a pathway to participate in a regional electricity market
- [SB 352](#) - Sets new rules for toxic air pollution monitoring program
- [SB 34](#) - Limits South Coast AQMD's ability to regulate emissions from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.
- [SB 782](#) - Facilitates the use of enhanced infrastructure financing districts or climate resilience districts to respond to disaster events like the Los Angeles wildfires.
- [SB 79](#) - Seeks to increase housing development and density by allowing Transit Oriented Development upzoning.

As for that last one, **SB 79** passing is a big "W" for the growing YIMBY movement in California. If Newsom signs the bill, it will also be a big "L" for the former reality TV influencer **Spencer Pratt**, who has been [trying to influence](#) California policy from his TikTok account.

Speaking of celebrities influencing policy: Another California bill, [SB 682](#), would ban the sale and distribution of several categories of products — most notably cookware — that contain intentionally added PFAS, starting in 2028. **David Chang, Rachael Ray** and other celebrity chefs who sell cookware are [advocating](#) for keeping "forever chemicals" in their non-stick products. As a former line cook, cookbook author, and [cast-iron enthusiast](#) I can



say with some authority that, “No chef, we do not need PFAS in our pans.”

***Welcome to The Drain, a weekly roundup of environmental and climate news. Our song of the week is the [“California” by Joni Mitchell](#). Here’s what else I see happening...***

## **The Emissions Protection Agency**



License plate spotted in Los Angeles. Photo: Angel Carreras

The EPA is planning [to end](#) what’s called the [Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program](#). This 15-year-old program requires the reporting of carbon dioxide, methane and other emissions data from about 8,000 power plants, oil refineries, and other facilities, Axios [notes](#). But that could soon end. “Nothing more than bureaucratic red tape,” is how EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin describes the program. That’s blatantly false.

The data is used by businesses and others to track and compare facilities’ greenhouse gas emissions, identify opportunities to cut pollution, minimize wasted energy, and save money, the EPA’s own website [reads](#). “States, cities, and other communities can use EPA’s greenhouse gas data to find high-emitting facilities in their area, compare emissions between similar facilities, and develop common-sense climate policies.” Plus, private

companies rely on the program's data "to demonstrate to investors that their efforts to cut greenhouse gases are working," **Maxine Joselow** [writes](#) for the New York Times, "and communities often use it to determine whether local facilities are releasing air pollution that threatens public health." This move could also cripple the oil industry's carbon capture ambitions because it "may gut the carbon capture tax credit, at least in the short term," **Robinson Meyer** [writes](#) at Heatmap News.

You cannot fight what you cannot see, and you can't reduce what you don't track. That may be the point. EPA's proposal must be published in the Federal Register followed by public comment so it could be finalized within the next year. Enjoy the [mapping features](#) of this data while it's available.

And if EPA's deregulation campaign is something that you're following, join the Emmett Institute on Monday, September 29 for a webinar all about what comes next in the fight over the Endangerment Finding. My UCLA colleagues **Ann Carlson** and **Cara Horowitz** will be joined by **Joe Goffman**, Former Asst. Administrator of the Office of Air and Radiation at US EPA, along with UCLA climate scientist **Kate McKinnon**. [Register here.](#)

# UP IN THE AIR

## CLIMATE POLICY *WITHOUT* THE ENDANGERMENT FINDING

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## Other Pollution News

New research has for the first time linked carbon emissions from the world's biggest fossil fuel companies to deadly heatwaves. The study's authors examined 213 heat waves from 2000 to 2023 in the International Disaster Database, a list of global disasters reported because of casualties, economic losses, emergency declarations and calls for international

assistance, **Karissa Waddick** [reports](#) for USA Today. “The research has been hailed as a leap forward in the legal battle to hold Big Oil accountable for the damages being caused by the climate crisis,” [reports](#) **Damian Carrington** for the Guardian. For example, it finds that the emissions from any one of the 14 biggest companies were by themselves enough to cause more than 50 heatwaves that would otherwise have been virtually impossible.

Tiny toxic particles spewed by Canadian wildfires killed 82,000 people in 2023, according to a [study published in Nature on Wednesday](#). These toxic particles were even responsible for 22,000 early deaths in *Europe*, the Guardian [reports](#).

The Trump administration is [taking yet another shot](#) at climate litigation, this time in Colorado. In a [friend of the court brief](#) filed last week, the Solicitor General’s office sided with Big Oil, which wants the lawsuits transferred out of state courts and sent to federal courts.

## Energy

We Americans currently subsidize the fossil-fuel industry to the tune of nearly \$31-billion per year, according to a new analysis by the environmental campaign group Oil Change International. The subsidies “allow the sector to receive stunning 30,000% returns on investments,” [writes](#) **Dharna Noor**.

Why hasn’t it been a bigger story, **Emily Atkin** [asks](#), that Energy Secretary (and rich, former fracking CEO) Chris Wright just went on [a “multi-day, taxpayer-funded trip to Europe](#) to tell world leaders that the climate crisis is not really a big deal, and that the best way to protect their citizens is actually to buy more American gas”?

Even the world’s biggest petrostate is on board with solar power. Saudi Arabia is investing \$8 billion into going solar, the WSJ [reports](#), and is also investing in becoming a major supplier of critical minerals, **Aya Nader** [writes](#).

As mentioned above, the House plans to vote on Republican bills to address transmission backlogs, ease permitting for cross-border pipelines and make permanent a federal advisory committee on coal. [H.R. 1047](#).

Canal Power: A 1.6-megawatt installation called [Project Nexus](#) just went online in California’s Central Valley, with panels that span across canals in the vast agricultural region, [reports](#) **Maria Gallucci** at Canary Media.

Ocean power: The startup Eco Wave Power [just installed](#) a 100-kilowatt system at the Port of LA that uses seven steel “floaters” that bob with the waves, building up hydraulic pressure that is then converted into electric power.

Wind (Political) Power: There is one East Coast wind farm that has thus far escaped unscathed: a \$10.8 billion project under construction off the shores of Virginia, where Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, has been its champion, the New York Times [reports](#). “The governor has privately urged the Trump administration not to target the project.”

Solar Power: Texas installed 3,800 MW of new solar capacity — most in the nation — during the first half of 2025, ahead of California, Indiana, and Arizona. Meanwhile LA is falling behind: LAist and Crosstown LA [analyzed](#) permitting data and found rooftop solar installations have plummeted in the city of L.A. in recent years. The market may be saturated in terms of early adopters.

Big data centers are even less popular with neighboring residents than wind farms, according to a national poll conducted by Heatmap’s intelligence platform, [Heatmap Pro](#).

## Elsewhere in the World

Canada’s government is seriously considering eliminating a [federal cap on emissions](#) from the country’s oil and gas sector if the industry and province reduce their carbon footprint in other ways, **Amanda Stephenson** [reports](#) at Reuters.

Africa wants to be the [“continent of solutions.”](#) After three days of talks in Addis Ababa, African leaders have agreed to “a common climate roadmap ahead of COP30 in Brazil, **Tik Root** [writes](#) at Grist. The nations are pledging to present a unified position to developed nations at the global negotiations later this year.

Singapore, Japan, and European countries have all passed new measures to protect workers from extreme heat this year, **Somini Sengupta** and **Hisako Ueno** [report](#) for the New York Times.

More than two million people have been [evacuated](#) in Pakistan’s Punjab province as climate change-worsened floods sweep the country’s eastern region.

Chinese scientists have managed to create a new material that improves the taste of liquor while reducing pollution from the distilling process, **Alexander Kaufman** notes in the daily Heatmap newsletter.



## Other things worth your time

[Newsom announced](#) this week that California Air Resources Board Chair Liane Randolph is retiring from state service and named his senior climate advisor Lauren Sanchez to serve as the next CARB Chair.

New UCLA research [suggests](#) that the effects of Aliso Canyon, one of the largest methane gas leaks in U.S. history, could reverberate for generations: Women in the later stages of pregnancy who lived near the blowout in northwestern L.A. County had a nearly 50% higher-than-expected chance of having a low-birth-weight baby.

The Bureau of Land Management recently announced [plans](#) to rescind a Biden-era rule that placed conservation on equal footing with other uses of federal land. Now, Republican lawmakers want to use the Congressional Review Act to permanently erase federal land use plans in Alaska — and beyond, **Lois Parshley** [reports](#) for Grist.

Yet another group of experts says Western states urgently need to cut water use to avert a deepening crisis on the Colorado River, **Ian James** [reports](#). Utah researchers are urging Trump's Interior Department to intervene and impose substantial cutbacks in water use.



**Sun Day** is a global day of action happening this weekend. You can go test drive an EV, tour a fully electrified home, or do an eco-scavenger hunt at [the Whittier event](#), which doubles as a National Drive Electric Month event. Engage with half a dozen environmental groups or watch a live podcast taping in [Santa Monica](#). Or help with a beach cleanup in [Long Beach](#).

There are a handful of [events](#) around Los Angeles with 14 from Santa Barbara to San Diego.

Hawai'i and Wisconsin just joined the Affordable Clean Cars Coalition, a group of 13 states that [says it will push back](#) against the Trump administration's policies of "putting polluters over people."

Climate scientists who sued the Administration have declared victory after the DOE dissolved the controversial working group of five well-known climate contrarians that published the report questioning climate science, **Ella Nilsen** [reports](#) at CNN.

The Center for Biological Diversity and the Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation filed a [lawsuit](#) last week against the Trump administration over the federal failure to require updated development and production plans for oil drilling at the Santa Ynez Unit off the coast of Santa Barbara. That's where Sable [wants to restart](#) the previously ruptured oil pipeline.

A [good long read](#) in the New York Times Magazine about the power of a small environmental law program – when students at University of the South Pacific's School of Law decided to write a letter to the ICJ and ultimately reshaped global law.

Grist is out with its [2025 Grist 50 List](#) of movers and shakers who are "making a real difference and moving the needle."

The latest Boiling Point podcast from **Sammy Roth** [is a spiriting conversation](#) with **Rabbi Jennie Rosenn** about the Jewish climate group Dayenu.

[Climate Map LA](#) is a full list of upcoming LA climate events.

And SoCal's "eagle advocates" are vowing to [fight the gated community](#) planned near Jackie and Shadow's nest