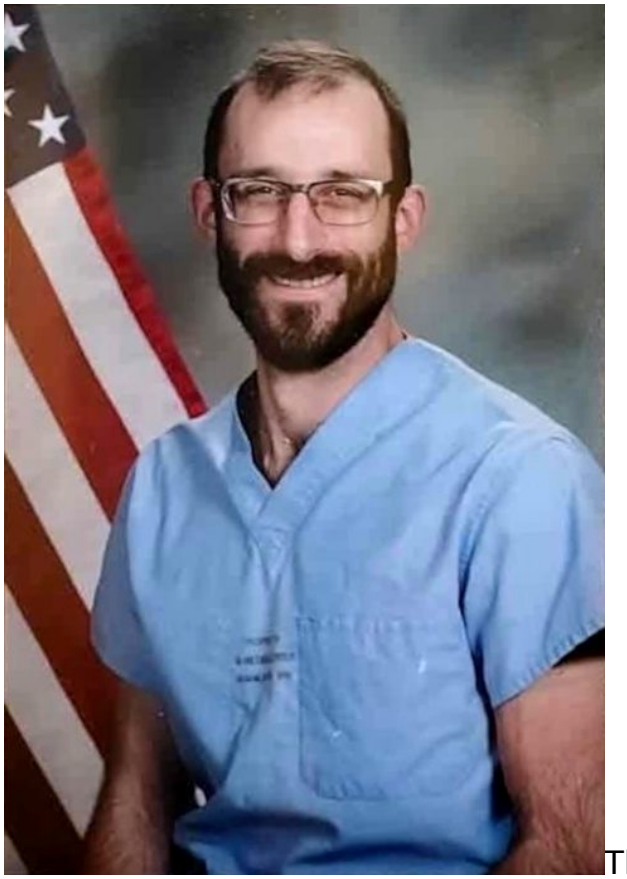


Does your heart hurt from watching agents of the U.S. government execute a law-abiding citizen in the street while he is helping others try to stay safe during an authoritarian takeover of an American city? If you work on environmental and climate issues, you probably have felt this rage over what's happening but also thought that it has little to do with your work or your field. That's not true.

Here are at least five connections between the brutal ICE attacks and the Trump administration's assault on U.S. environmental protections. Environmental and climate advocates can help organize in their communities.

Read on for a roundup of environmental and climate news so far this week.

They Attack Helpers

This administration has targeted helpers — like scientists and civil servants — since Day One. Now they've killed one.

Alex Pretti was helping direct traffic when he stepped between a woman and an agent who was pepper spraying her. Here's a good second-by-second analysis of the 40 seconds before he was gunned down. Pretti cared. He was an ICU nurse employed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, a competitive cyclist who loved the outdoors, and a former Boy Scout who'd also attended protests in 2020 after George Floyd's murder, the Associated Press has reported. There's a video of Pretti solemnly delivering the final salute for a VA patient. Pretti's mother said her son cared immensely about the direction the county was headed, especially the Trump administration's horrific rollback of environmental regulations, **Emily Atkin** reports at HEATED. Atkin adds "When I get into these funks, it's like I start believing that climate change is something separate from state violence—and it's not."

Trump and the MAGA movement have sought to paint caring helpers as losers or even domestic insurrectionists. Americans must reclaim the virtue of caring for the planet and people.

The Strategy is to Gaslight the Public

Trump has for years lied with impunity about climate change, even as Americans suffer firsthand from the reality of climate change and climate-fueled disasters, and in the face of convincing data. Like data showing the last three years were the warmest on record, increasing at significantly faster rate than they had been, and wreaking havoc as a result.

Lying to try to deny what Americans can see with your own eyes has also become the strategy of Trump's Department of Homeland Security. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem has lied with impunity, and without shame, about every recent shooting by DHS despite myriad videos that contradict their version of events. After Saturday's killing of Pretti, Noem said he had "committed an act of domestic terrorism, that's the facts." The narratives coming from U.S. government officials are claims contradicted by the evidence, which ultimately leads to gaslighting the American public. (They're also literally gassing the American public — deploying various types of tear gas, tactical grenades, and mysterious green smoke on peaceful protestors.)

Last week ahead of a serious winter storm, Trump said on social media: "Record Cold Wave expected to hit 40 States. Rarely seen anything like it before. Could the Environmental Insurrectionists please explain — WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GLOBAL WARMING???"

That's not how it works, of course. UC Climate scientist **Daniel Swain**, responded that, "This social media post crams a remarkable amount of inflammatory language and factually inaccurate assertions into a very short statement.

"Climate change deniers love to use major winter storms as "proof" that global warming isn't real, writes **Jeva Lange** at Heatmap News. "But in the case of this weekend's polar vortex, there is evidence that Arctic *warming* is responsible for the record cold temperature projections across the United States." And cold weather actually kills more people in the United States than heat, Lange notes. **Matt Simon** at Grist also has an explainer on how climate change can supercharge a winter storm.

In fact, Americans who understand global warming is happening outnumber those who think it is not by a ratio of more than 5 to 1 — 72% versus 13% — according to a new survey out today.

While Trump is yelling conspiracies about cold weather, the rest of the world is preparing for the reality of a generally warmer world. “By the middle of the century, we will probably have around 10 to 12 countries to have a cold enough climate to host Olympic snow sports,” **Karl Stoss**, chairman of the IOC’s Future Host Commission told the New York Times. The wrong ice is melting.

Funding ICE Defunds Public Health, Safety, Energy Jobs

Budgets are priorities. What Trump marketed as “one big, beautiful bill” essentially defunded clean energy and doubled annual Homeland Security funding, grabbing $170 billion to be used over four years. ICE was provided $30 billion for operations and $45 billion for detention facilities — a massive increase from the typical $10 billion a year, PBS reports.

Meanwhile, this Trump tax plan repealed spending aimed at reducing greenhouse gas pollution that had been passed by Democrats and created more opportunities for planet-warming fossil fuels. The tax bill modified and rescinded funding for the Methane Emissions Reduction Program (MERP), Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (the GGRF), and the American Innovation and Manufacturing Act (the AIM Act), among others. A model from the Rhodium Group last summer found that the difference between the bill and no bill was about 575 million extra metric tons of carbon dioxide in the year 2035 — the equivalent of putting an additional 134 million gas-powered cars on the road for a year.

The U.S. clean energy industry lost a whopping 10,000 manufacturing jobs last year, part of an overall decline that saw the country shed about 72,000 manufacturing jobs in 2025, **Scott Waldman** reports for E&E News.

And yet the U.S. government is offering $50,000 signing bonuses to untrained, unvetted, inexperienced people who want to join ICE goon squads. At the end of the Biden administration, there were roughly 7,000 ICE agents, according to the Atlantic’s Caitlin Dickerson. Trump’s DHS has hired 12,000 since then. DHS says 3,000 ICE agents have been sent to Minnesota and put 1,500 army soldiers on standby. Just imagine the costs in dollars (and emissions) for this kind of madness.

In the days ahead, Congress must approve a routine annual funding package for Homeland Security or risk a partial government shutdown on Jan. 30. A growing group of senators say they won’t support additional funds without significant changes.

State and Local Authority is Threatened

In Year One, Trump took aim at all sorts of state and local climate environmental laws and policies. So, the attempt to bring a city to its knees feels familiar.

Regarding Minneapolis, White House advisor and non-lawyer Stephen Miller egged on ICE agents this month during a FOX News interview. “You have immunity to perform your duties, and no one — no city official, no state official, no illegal alien, no leftist agitator or domestic insurrectionist — can prevent you from fulfilling your legal obligations and duties,” Miller said. “The Department of Justice has made clear that if officials cross that line into obstruction, into criminal conspiracy against the United States or against ICE officers, then they will face justice.”

Actual legal experts were quick to point out that there is no such thing as “blanket immunity” for federal officials committing crimes. But like with its attack on state climate policies, the Trump administration’s overreach is being challenged in court.

U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez is currently considering whether to grant requests by the state and Twin Cities to halt the administration’s “Operation Metro Surge.” Minnesota lawyers argue that the siege violates the 10th Amendment, which protects states from encroachment by the federal government. Judge Menendez “seemed to agonize over how to draw a line between legitimate federal law enforcement and an unconstitutional incursion on Minnesota’s sovereignty,” Politico reports. This dynamic is relatable for anyone working on state climate policies.

Climate Change is Driving Migration

Lastly, as I wrote back in June, climate change is driving migration. Industries contributing to the climate crisis are making the Global South less livable. And now the Trump administration is intentionally increasing climate pollution that will force more people from their home countries to escape climate disasters. All of this points to the need for environmental organizations and advocates to engage in this fight that is ostensibly about immigration raids but has everything to do with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

To end on a bright spot, here’s one good story from Minnesota. A building in Minneapolis where the rock star and hometown hero Prince once went to school has become a climate resilience center where people can go for help during

emergencies, reports Yale Climate Connections.

Welcome to The Drain, a weekly roundup of environmental and climate news. Our song of the week is "The Beautiful Ones" by Prince & the Revolution.

The Other Ice Storm



Utilities across the country have seen big demand during the recent Winter Storm Fern, with the possibility of power outages lasting multiple days.

Nearly a million American households lost power amid the storm. Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana were the worst hit, with hundreds of thousands of households left in the dark, according to live data on the Power Outage tracker website. At least 28 people have died.

"The good news is that pipeline winterization efforts that followed the deadly blackouts in 2021's Winter Storm Uri made some progress in keeping everything running in the cold," **Alexander Kaufman** notes at Heatmap.

In Texas, ERCOT officials expected to see power demand close in on power supply by Monday 8 a.m., but the grid held "flawlessly," Governor Abbott said.

PJM, the nation's largest grid operator, predicts the lasting deep freeze could drive the grid region to a new power demand peak today.

Power plant outages surged, Reuters reports, as constricted natural gas supplies and frigid temperatures cut the electricity output of the region's generation fleet.

DHS even paused terminations of FEMA employees working on the disaster response as it ramps up preparations for last weekend's storm, Brianna Sacks reports for the Washington Post.

Energy

The electro-tech revolution is rapidly upending the energy sector and electrification — not decarbonization – is the climate story of 2026, according to "Zero: The Climate Race" podcast from Bloomberg. **Kingsmill Bond** of Ember talks with host **Akshat Rathi.**

European countries led by Britain, Germany, Denmark just signed a clean energy pact at a summit in Hamburg, pledging to deliver 100 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind power through large-scale joint projects, Reuters reports.

The Energy Department announced officially last week that it was revising or canceling more than $83 billion in loans for clean energy technologies that had previously been approved under Biden.

In Missouri, GOP legislation backed by the governor would institute a temporary ban on building any utility-scale solar projects in the state until at least the end of 2027, which **Jael Holzman** says would be the first state-wide solar moratorium.

The Courts



Michigan's Attorney General filed what E&E's **Lesley Clark** calls "a first-of-its-kind complaint" last Friday in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan, accusing four of the largest producers and the American Petroleum Institute of breaking federal and state antitrust laws by acting as a "cartel" conducting a sprawling "conspiracy" to restrict the development of renewable energy and electric vehicles as far back as 1979. The companies' "collusion" has raised energy prices for Michigan consumers, the suit alleges.

The federal government's gambit to quash state litigation against Big Oil over climate change before it's even filed leads "inescapably" to dismissal, according to an order handed down Saturday, **Jennifer Hijazi** reports at Bloomberg Law.

In a court filing last Friday, the Massachusetts Attorney General, New York's Attorney General and other members of a blue state coalition joined industry calls for a federal judge to block six Trump administration actions targeting green energy development.

A federal judge last week barred the Trump administration from any further interference in the $5 billion effort to build electric vehicle charging stations on highways, **David Ferris** reports.

Cars

Tesla has officially discontinued Autopilot, its basic self-driving software, in the U.S. and Canada, but the company wants to boost adoption of a more advanced version of the technology that it calls Full Self-Driving (Supervised), Tech Crunch reports.

General Motors is killing the Chevy Bolt — again. **Andrew Moseman** writes that this tells us everything we need to know about the state of the U.S. auto market.

California

CLEE at Berkeley Law is co-hosting a forum with four of the top candidates running to be California's next governor tomorrow (Wednesday, January 28). California Environmental Voters extended invitations to the top six candidates for governor, based on recent polling. Four candidates accepted the invitation; two did not. You can register to join the forum here.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on Monday announced that it is issuing two calls for information to solicit oil industry feedback on the specific "areas of interest" for potential offshore oil and gas leasing along the Southern and Central California coasts, which have seen oil spills in years past.

California sued the Trump administration in federal court over its approvals for oil pipelines near the state's coast. California argues that the Trump administration's moves to restart the pipelines contravene the state's authority over the vessels.

In response to the LA fires, lawmakers are drafting new bills this session, or reintroducing previously stalled proposals that aim to regulate insurance companies, **CalMatters** writes. SB 876 seeks to make various amendments to the state's insurance code. They include getting insurance companies to share their disaster-recovery plans with the insurance department; doubling penalties from $5,000 to $10,000 for each violation of fair claims practices during declared emergencies; and requiring insurers to notify policyholders within five days when they're assigned a new adjuster.

California's power sector emissions fell 8% last year driven by huge growth in solar and battery capacity, even as they rose almost everywhere else, **Michael Thomas** writes at Distilled.