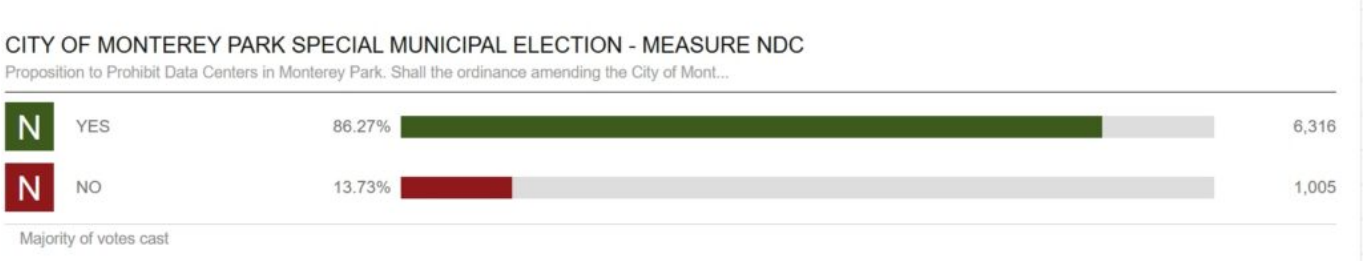


The stakes are high for climate and energy policy in California's primary election. In the gubernatorial race, we'll either get a real runoff between a billionaire climate progressive and a moderate Democrat with big corporate backing OR, more likely, we'll get to watch that moderate Dem do a cake walk against a Republican. The governor's race is still too uncertain to call. But there is one primary race where the loser is already clear: data centers.

Voters in Monterey Park — a city in the San Gabriel Valley region of Greater LA — just became the first in California to pass a full-fledged ban on data centers.

"Pride in the past, Faith in the future," is the official motto of Monterey Park. That future will not include data centers. Residents voted more than 86% in favor of Measure NDC which reads simply: "Shall the ordinance amending the City of Monterey Park General Plan to prohibit data centers citywide to protect air quality, drinking water resources and public health; prevent impacts to electricity and water rates; with the prohibition of data centers continuing until ended by voters, be adopted?"



Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

In the lead up to the vote, yard signs with “No Data Center” in English and Chinese next to images of dragons appeared along the city’s sidewalks, **Blanca Begert** reported this week for the Los Angeles Times. Measure NDC (No Data Centers!) is the culmination of a campaign that started in 2024 when a developer tried to open one about 500 feet from homes.

This was one of the first votes on a permanent ban in the country, but it certainly won’t be the last. In New York, lawmakers are moving toward approving a one-year ban on new data centers, which would allow pausing permits and also impose renewable energy requirements. Backers cite rising utility costs.

In fact, the one unifying political issue in 2026 seems to be the data centers fueling America’s AI boom. At least seven in 10 Americans oppose a data center being built near their home, according to a brand new Heatmap Pro poll. That’s a massive shift in public opinion from last fall when a similar survey found Americans evenly split on the issue. “Young people, Democrats, and rural voters are more hostile to the projects, but they are broadly unpopular with Americans across geographic and political categories,” Heatmap’s **Robinson Meyer** writes.

Why is this infrastructure becoming so unpopular so quickly? The secrecy isn’t helping. Data center builders don’t tell the public how much water they use, according to a Next10 report — and the industry is noticeably encroaching into water-stressed, drought-affected, and vulnerable communities. Just today, Google released new water usage guidelines that it’s hoping could ease some of the local backlash.

Labor unions are starting to deploy their political power — and a persuasive jobs message — to influence state efforts to rein in or at least regulate data centers, **Jason Plautz** reports for E&E News.

Meanwhile, the political influence of AI tech companies in general is the focus of more and more scrutiny. This week also brought news of a new project called Mapping AI that is trying to track which organizations, policymakers, and public figures are influencing Artificial Intelligence — and where they stand on regulation, risk, and governance.

People are unhappy in 2026 and it turns out that big, ugly, windowless warehouses

full of computer servers and graphic processing units are an easy target for that bipartisan discontent. Now, if only that same passion could be channeled and directed at other highly polluting players in the energy industry who wield great influence in California politics.

Welcome to The Drain, a weekly roundup of environmental and climate news. Our song of the week is "Begging for Change" by Pulp and War Child Records. My Climate Playlist is now 265 songs and 19 hours of music with an environmental message. (on Spotify and Apple Music).

More California



Traffic on the 405 Freeway in West Los Angeles. Credit: Chris Yarzab, Flickr

The California Air Resources Board voted 10-3 last week to extend and change its rules for the state's cap-and-invest program. That we can agree on, but from there it's dueling narratives.

"California joins New York's retreat from climate goals," was the Heatmap headline and many stories described the change as affordability politics colliding with climate goals. AP reports that the state will now give away as much as $3.5 billion worth of

allowances to polluting companies — mostly manufacturers and oil refiners — for free if they build projects that help them reduce their emissions. The free permit pool is capped at the exact number of permits that must be retired to hit California's 2030 climate target, CalMatters writes. Regulatory staff forecasted on Friday that the approved changes to the rules would not increase gas prices, POLITICO reports.

"CARB is poised to lead once again by adopting new rules," my UCLA Law colleague **Mary Nichols** wrote on LinkedIn. "California can continue to grow the economy, attract investment in clean technologies, and protect consumers against oil industry price shocks by fine-tuning this and its whole suite of energy, transportation and natural resource policies," said Nichols, former chair of CARB.

Some environmentalists and lawmakers say the changes will hinder the state's efforts to reduce planet-warming emissions and that the new incentive program for manufacturers and refiners is untested and lacks sufficient guardrails to ensure it is not abused.

In other state news… Residents and city council members of Garden Grove are demanding accountability and financial compensation for those evacuated during the chemical tank emergency at GKN Aerospace. Air quality regulators had flagged multiple compliance problems years before the crisis, according to reporting by **Alejandra Reyes-Velarde** and **Alejandro Lazo** at CalMatters.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy all plan to visit the embattled Sable Offshore oil drilling project off the Santa Barbara coast sometime this week, reports POLITICO's **James Bikales.**

A company called OceanWell plans to test a new desalination technology in deep water off the coast of Malibu later this year after a successful trial in a California reservoir, the LAT's **Ian James** reports.

The California Senate voted 35-1 to pass SB 868, The Plug and Play Solar Act. SB 868 streamlines approvals for plug-in solar systems. Small-scale, mobile solar has the potential to lower energy costs for millions of California renters, apartment dwellers, and homeowners. The bill heads next to the California Assembly.

Next-generation geothermal could reduce California's annual electricity supply costs

by around $44 billion beginning in 2045 when the state aims for 100% carbon-free electricity, according to a Clean Air Task Force report.

Starting July 1, SB 79 will push cities to increase housing development in neighborhoods located near major transit stops. On Monday, the Southern California Association of Governments published its official map showing where new housing density will be allowed, **David Wagner** reports for LAist.

National Parks



I wrote last week about how our entrance fees to underfunded national parks are paying for some of Trump's beautification projects back in Washington D.C.

Turns out that includes paying millions to quickly cover four enormous bronze horses with extra-thick 23 karat gold leaf, **Anna Kramer** reports at NOTUS. "The money for the rush job is coming from National Park Service funds. In total, more than $100 million is flowing to gaudy new D.C. beautification projects.

If you want a deep dive on just how abnormal the no-bid contracting process has been to spend taxpayer dollars on D.C. fountains, New York Times investigative journalist **David Farenthold is** a guest on The Daily and walks through all the shenanigans.

The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library opens on July 4 in the tiny town of Medora, North Dakota. But the man who did as much as anyone to help the library reach its impressive scale—Doug Burgum, the current U.S. Secretary of the Interior—has overseen deep cuts in public-lands agencies for Donald Trump, the least conservation-minded president in modern history, **Alex Heard** reports for RE:PUBLIC.

Trump Administration

A proposed new rule from Trump's OMB would replace merit-based funding of science with a heavily politicized process and would deprive scientists of the ability to rely on funding for long-term projects. "This proposal has no real legal basis. It is likely to undermine American science, giving a boost to China's efforts to take over global scientific leadership," **Dan Farber** writes at Legal Planet.

The SEC formally proposed last week to rescind its 2024 rule that would have required publicly traded companies to disclose certain information related to climate change, the Hill reports.

Federal energy efficiency rebate programs intended to boost electric heating will no longer cover the switch from fossil fuels, according to guidance from the Department of Energy, which published an update on how it will implement consumer programs with $8.8 billion in funding. Clean energy and environmental advocates told **Dan Gearino** at Inside Climate News that said the guidance was overdue and severely flawed.

A federal judge has temporarily blocked the Trump administration's efforts to break up the National Center for Atmospheric Research, a truly premier scientific research center that is critical for understanding extreme weather events, Bloomberg reports.

The Trump administration is delaying a phaseout of hydrofluorocarbons, the potent planet-warming chemicals used in air-conditioning and refrigeration — restrictions put in place because of a bipartisan law Mr. Trump signed during his first term, the New York Times reports.

The air strikes that ignited Tehran's oil infrastructure in March unleashed toxic sulfur dioxide fumes across an area roughly the size of Italy, rivaling moderate volcanic eruptions in scale and intensity, **Laura Millan** writes for Bloomberg.

More Energy

Geothermal heats up on Capitol Hill: The House of Representatives voted yesterday to pass a package of bills aimed at bolstering development of geothermal energy in the U.S. The package, called the Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act within the (bipartisan) Geothermal Energy Advancement Act, overhauls rules for permitting geothermal specifically to speed up the timelines for deploying that hot technology.

New wind fees? New legislation that the House Appropriations subcommittee advanced last week would impose a range of fees on offshore wind projects, including $7,300 annual fees for onshore inspection visits and $15,400 for a visual inspection of an individual turbine.

The AI boom is pushing companies across the economy — from tech giants to automakers — deep into the energy business, **Amy Harder** reports. Case in point: Last month marked the formal introduction of Ford Energy.

Why are lawmakers in Michigan and Pennsylvania spreading false claims about Frito-Lay, one of the biggest purchasers of potatoes in the country, categorically refusing to buy potatoes grown on farmland that has hosted solar installations? “Like other forms of misinformation about renewables, it helps fuel local pushback to proposed energy installations,” writes **Austyn Gaffney** at Canary Media.

Cities and States

Speaking of solar potatoes… A pair of new laws in Virginia signed this spring by Gov. Abigail Spanberger require Dominion and Appalachian Power, the state’s other investor-owned utility, to develop more shared solar farms — also known as community solar — on farmers’ properties.

New York’s assembly passed a bill to legalize plug-in balcony solar panels, sending it to the governor’s desk. The so-called SUNNY Act authorizes small portable solar panels that can plug in to standard outlets and could be placed on balconies or elsewhere. Supporters see it as a “a small bright spot for progress on clean energy after lawmakers also approved weakening the state’s 2019 climate law,” **Marie J. French** writes.

In most of the country, utility commissioners are appointed by governors or state legislatures, but in 10 states, voters elect the officials directly — and in nine of

those states, commissioner seats are up for election this year. Can you name all nine? **Kathryn Krawczyk** has you covered.

The city of Ann Arbor has a model plan to give residents money toward the purchase of an EV amid high gasoline prices. “Ann Arbor plans to hand out big rebate checks, some up to $7,500, to qualifying Ann Arbor residents who buy a new all-electric vehicle from any Michigan car dealer. It offers up to $4,000 checks to those who buy a used EV,” according to the Detroit Free Press.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 33 states have enacted more than 100 Artificial Intelligence-related laws this year alone.