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Energy and Climate Conference 2026  
*Big, Beautiful, and Ablaze...*  
**Where Does California's Energy Journey Go From Here?**

February 5-6  
Carneros Resort, Napa

*Last year, California amped up its energy agenda with a flurry of policy actions meant to address affordability, reliability, and decarbonization.*

*It was a gut check moment that recognized that California's energy goals – big and beautiful to many – require similarly big and bold acts along the way if we are to successfully trailblaze our way to an energy future never before achieved by anyone, anywhere.*

*And the road ahead is still filled with peril and uncertainty. In addition to the inevitable challenges of implementation, California must also account for our relationship with the federal government, fraught with friction and substantial funding losses.*

*Our 2026 Energy and Climate Conference will assess the realities of our energy and climate goals, evaluate the means by which we hope to get there, and determine what more must be done to lead Californians on an energy journey that ultimately arrives at the dream destination of lower cost, lower carbon, and less drama.*

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5****Napa Hall**

11:30 – 12:30pm	Arrival – Check-In and Lunch – Carneros Courtyard
12:30 – 12:45pm	<b>Welcome – Conference Overview and Roundtable Introductions</b>

Preview of conference topics, speakers, and goals

**Jay Hansen**, President & CEO, CFEE

**Session 1**

12:45 – 2:00pm	<b>A Jolt to the System! And a Historic Year of Legislation and What It Set in Motion</b>
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At last year's CFEE Energy Conference in February, we explored the potential for a cap & trade extension, CEQA streamlining, affordability fixes, and electricity grid expansion. Fast forward a few months later, and lo and behold, many of these major items were pushed across the legislative finish line. Now, the daunting gauntlet of implementation awaits. Our opening session will recap the major new laws enacted in 2025 and explore the next steps for implementation in 2026 and beyond. We will also consider how California's policy actions fit within the broader landscape of what's happening elsewhere in the U.S.

- What were the key energy-related bills enacted in 2025? Of those bills, which are likely to have immediately-felt impacts? Which ones will play out over a longer time horizon?
- What is new in the cap & invest extension and GGRF investment plan? How might industry respond as screws are tightened on emissions and allowances while the overall carbon market received much desired long-term certainty?
- How might reforms to CEQA affect energy sector projects? Did this year's set of reforms set the stage for future CEQA reforms in other energy sectors?
- What is the vision for how SB 237 will boost in-state oil production and stabilize the fuels market? How might it translate to more affordable energy? Bigger picture, how can we facilitate an energy evolution to a lower carbon system while minimizing unplanned market disruptions and volatile prices?
- What consequential bills were left on the Assembly/Senate floor or the Governor's desk that might get the Frankenstein jolt and come back to life?
- Taking a step back, how do California's actions fit within the larger context of what's happening elsewhere in the U.S.? How are markets, other state governments, and civil society reacting in response to California's continued focus on energy and climate issues?

**Louise Bedsworth**, Executive Director, Center for Law, Energy & the Environment, UC Berkeley

**Katelyn Roedner Sutter**, California State Director, Environmental Defense Fund

**Jodie Muller**, President & CEO, Western States Petroleum Association

2:00 – 2:15pm	Break
2:15 – 3:45pm	<p><b>Session 2</b></p> <p><b>Navigating the Federal Funhouse...Can California's Energy Buildout Still Be Big and Beautiful?</b></p>

Like a funhouse of mirrors, different Congresses and Presidential Administrations have always given California shifting visions for how the federal government would bring our state's energy ambitions into focus. Following the passage of HR 1 ("One Big Beautiful Bill Act") and other federal actions, it is time to size up what the latest policy reflections from D.C. mean for our certainly big and hopefully still beautiful energy aspirations.

- What are California's projected energy needs for 2030 and beyond? How does that compare to current buildout trends? What is the gap, and how is it expected to change post-HR 1? Will we now need more out of our natural gas fleet?
- What are the federal tax credits that helped pencil out clean energy projects? When will they go away?
- Where can California work in partnership with the Trump Administration on their energy priorities? Geothermal? Nuclear? Carbon capture? Other?
- Can California still become a "green hydrogen" hub without federal support?
- Is there a role for California to step in to help finance clean energy projects that may not go forward now without federal incentives?
- S&P Global forecasts that California's wholesale electricity prices will increase by 9 percent as a result of HR 1 – how does this translate into what customers will pay? Can California offset these anticipated cost increases?
- How are tariff comings and goings rippling through the energy sector?
- With Trump Administration "all in" to win the global artificial intelligence (AI) race, energy-hungry data centers are expanding rapidly in the U.S. and California – how is data center load affecting costs for California ratepayers?
- After significantly reducing support for new renewable projects, can the US actually win the global AI race with just gas, nuclear, hydrogen and other fossil fuels, or do we need to re-focus the Feds on an "all of the above" energy approach to stay competitive in the AI race?
- What's the fuss with "virtual power plants" and their touted potential for more efficiently leveraging existing grid resources? How can they fill the gap for energy projects that will now go unbuilt? How might customers benefit?

**Wade Crowfoot**, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

**Arne Olson**, Senior Partner, E3

**Armond Cohen**, Executive Director, Clean Air Task Force

**Jan Smutny-Jones**, CEO and General Counsel, Independent Energy Producers Association

3:45 – 4:00pm	Break
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**Session 3**

4:00 – 5:15pm

**Not Out of the Woods Yet...Wildfire Recovery, Preparedness, & Paying for it All**

One of the key bills to emerge out of the legislative session was SB 254, which sought to stabilize the Wildfire Fund while addressing affordability concerns for ratepayers. Although investor-owned utilities and the state are committing significant resources to manage the hard costs of wildfire risk, there remain unresolved issues related to liability as well as the overarching need to more effectively prepare for future wildfires and other natural disasters. How can we get a better handle on mitigating and responding to looming catastrophes, which are certain to come?

- What is the Wildfire Fund, and why was it necessary to increase its funding base?
- SB 254 promotes securitization of wildfire mitigation capital expenditures and public financing and ownership of electrical transmission projects – why are these measures expected to reduce costs?
- What work remains undone to...
  - ...better manage damages and liability related to utility-caused wildfires?
  - ...further reduce our risk of catastrophic wildfires and other natural disasters?
  - ....enhance immediate emergency response and long-term recovery and rebuilding?
  - ...address any unresolved contributors to rising rates, and how can we prepare for those that may hit ratepayers in the future?
- Have any other states done a better job identifying the right mix of regulatory/legal form, utility oversight and operation, and technological deployment? What best practices can we bring to California?

**Michael Wara**, Director of the Climate and Energy Policy Program, Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment

**Caroline Winn**, Executive Vice President, Sempra and Board Chair, San Diego Gas & Electric

**Mark Pestrella**, Director, Los Angeles County Public Works

5:15 – 6:15pm

**Hear from Your Next Governor!**

For our final mini session of the day, we will invite the top candidates for Governor to share their energy vision for California. They will each receive 7-10 minutes, and their speaking order will be randomly drawn. Conversation will then continue at our Reception & Dinner, which candidates will be joining as well.

6:15pm

**Reception & Dinner with Gubernatorial Candidates – Carneros Courtyard**

Our reception and dinner, even more exceptional this year as we invite the candidates for Governor to connect with our distinguished CFEE energy leaders. We will be dining alfresco, please dress accordingly.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6****Napa Hall**

8:00 – 9:00am	Breakfast – Farm Dining Room
9:00 – 10:30am	<u>Session 4</u> <b>The Pathway to a Regional Grid – Making Friends and Competitors of Our Western Neighbors</b>

After greenlighting the expansion of the western regional electricity market, California will now be partnering more closely with our western neighbors than ever before. At the same time, we will also be competing to have new energy projects put in our backyard and enjoy the jobs and economic spoils that come from steel in the ground. Where do we go from here to make sure a regional grid truly serves California's interests?

- What are the next steps to set up a more regional power market? What does it mean to enhance cooperation with other western states? What will it mean to compete?
- What does California need to do in the short term to ensure the decision to regionalize our energy system is a long term success for Californians?
- We are still not building infrastructure and power plants at the speed needed to meet our own energy goals – what are some of the untapped opportunities to accelerate pace and scale of construction?
- Do we have some promising examples of faster permitting opportunities that can be used to greater effect?
- How are other states looking at the regional electricity market opportunity?
- Do other states have proven mechanisms for better supporting project development?

**Andrew McAllister**, Commissioner, California Energy Commission

**Kathleen Staks**, Executive Director, Western Freedom

**Pam Sporborg**, Director, Transmission & Market Services, Portland General Electric

**Stacey Crowley**, Vice President, External Affairs, California Independent System Operator

10:30 – 10:45am	Break
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10:45 – 12:00pm

**Session 5****Finishing Strong in 2026 & Previewing What Awaits the Next Governor**

With Governor Newsom in his eighth and final year, it is a good time to start imagining and inspiring an energy agenda for his soon-to-be elected successor. Building on what we heard on our first day when several of the top candidates joined us to share their early ideas of their energy agenda, our final session will ask a distinguished lineup of panelists to discuss the plans for California's energy and climate policy in 2026 and consider what challenges and opportunities await the next Governor.

- How is the Newsom Administration looking to finish strong in 2026? What are the key areas that CARB, CEC, and the CPUC prioritizing?
- Our need for fossil fuels is not going away anytime soon nor is our need to continue decarbonizing the economy – what are some of the ways the next Governor can reconcile these seemingly contradictory impulses?
- Affordability is almost certainly to be an ongoing challenge for the next Administration – what efforts under Governor Newsom might bear fruit down the road, and where should the next Governor focus their efforts to effectively manage energy costs?
- California still has a ways to go when it comes to building the needed energy infrastructure to achieve our state goals – how could the incoming Administration facilitate much needed project development?
- One way or another, the relationship with the Trump Administration will affect the next Governor's agenda – is it possible to find areas of productive alignment? As a provocative example, is it time for California to finally re-embrace nuclear, which is a priority for the federal government? Absent alignment, how can California continue to advance our energy priorities?

**Lauren Sanchez**, Chair, California Air Resources Board

**Ann Patterson**, Policy Scholar, Stanford University and Former Cabinet Secretary for Governor Newsom

**Jennifer Barrera**, President & CEO, California Chamber of Commerce

**Arnie Sowell Jr.**, Executive Director, NextGen Policy

12:00pm

**Closing Remarks and Adjournment**