

# Nancy Pelosi's Seat is Open. Meet Two Candidates Vying to Succeed Her.

<https://www.climateone.org/audio/nancy-pelosis-seat-open-meet-two-candidates-vying-succeed-her>

Recorded on April 29, 2026



*Note: Transcripts are generated using a combination of automated software and human transcribers and may contain errors. Please check the actual audio before quoting it.*

**Ariana Brocious:** This is Climate One. I'm Ariana Brocious.

This year, one of the most powerful politicians in the country decided not to seek re-election. For nearly 38 years, Nancy Pelosi has represented the people of San Francisco in the US House of Representatives. As one of the most powerful House Speakers in U.S. history, Pelosi played a central role in advancing landmark environmental and climate laws, and bringing energy and climate policy to the forefront of the national agenda.

Her retirement opens up a space for a new person to take up her mantle as an advocate for climate and energy policies, as well as the other priorities of the people of California's 11th District. Today we're going to hear from two of the leading candidates vying to take that seat.

Saikat Chakrabarti is President of New Consensus, a think tank that focuses on climate and economic policy, where he has helped develop the Mission for America - a comprehensive, detailed plan to build a clean economy that aims to create better outcomes.

California State Senator Scott Wiener has authored more than 100 bills during his 9 years in office and focuses extensively on housing, transportation, civil rights, criminal justice reform, clean energy, and alleviating poverty.

Candidate Connie Chan was also invited to the conversation, but declined due to a scheduling issue. Chakrabarti and Wiener spoke with Greg Dalton on the Climate One stage during San Francisco Climate Week.

**Greg Dalton:** I'm delighted to have this opportunity to speak with you both. I know you've been doing this a lot around town. This is, we're kind of drill it into energy and, and climate today. And I want this to be more of a conversation rather than a, a strict, rigid debate. and I'm gonna ask you to, uh, uh, help me with kind of keeping kind of on the honor system here in terms of how much, uh, fair time. This is not structured as like, you know, 60 seconds, 60 seconds. We do have a a, a clock up here that's gonna have, uh, tracks sort of your cumulative air time and if it gets outta balance, I'll, I'll note that and then ask, um, the other person to give you some more time to the other person. So, does that sound sound good?

**Scott Wiener:** It's amazing accountability for politicians

**Greg Dalton:** All right. So with that, uh. Saikat, we need to make people see climate as something solved through politics and government rather than individual behavior change. How do we do that when Americans don't trust government and the Democratic brand is in the toilet?

**Saikat Chakrabarti:** Yeah, it's a great question. And the thing is, we have to present the real vision for having government make your lives better, to have government do more in your lives.

And that's why any sort of agenda that has a government doing things. Not just on climate, but things like universal healthcare, universal childcare, all the things we have to do to make a better life has to be coupled with an agenda to go after corruption. So that means banning congressional stock trading, right, banning the revolving door between Congress and the lobbying industry, getting corporate money out of our politics.

There's a reason why Donald Trump ran on this stuff. I mean, he ran on draining the swamp. And he of course lied. He's turned out to be the most corrupt president that we've ever had in this country. But it's politically salient and I think Democrats have to look in our own party as well and root out some of the corruption we see in there.

You know, when I worked in Congress, I saw how members of Congress will spend six, eight hours a day calling big donors for money. And that really shapes their worldview. You know, sometimes it results in quid pro quo corruption. I saw this with, uh, you know, we try to do some work to try to remove, um, uh, to try and make it possible for the IRS to file your taxes for you.

And we had pushback, not just from Republicans, but also Democrats, because Intuit, which, you know, makes TurboTax, they spend tons of money in campaign contributions to, uh, keep the IRS from filing your taxes for you. 'cause they can do it. But the other way you see it is, is just you present legislation to people.

And it, and people are just constantly thinking, which donors am I gonna upset, even if it's very popular legislation. So we absolutely have to root out corruption and get that to trust people in government being able to do this stuff and then actually make, use government to make people's lives better.

**Greg Dalton:** Scott Wiener.

**Scott Wiener:** Um, thanks for having us. Um, uh, so yes, we have to give people, uh, a confidence in government's ability to solve problems and to make their lives better. It's one of the reasons Donald Trump is in office because people, when people lose faith, that government can, can make their lives better, and they feel like their lives and their kids' lives are getting worse.

Uh, they will take. Risks including, uh, voting for, uh, a complete scam artist psycho to, to be president of the United States. Uh, and in terms of climate, um, we, I think there are, there are

things that we can do, uh, as government and that we must do, uh, to, uh, uh, really enable the clean energy transition and to do it in a way that.

That does improve people's lives and lowers people's costs, and that's a lot of the work that I've done in the legislature to try to, um, have more abundant and affordable. Clean energy to have more sustainable transportation and housing, uh, to try to strengthen our electric grid because without electrifying everything and powering it with clean energy, we're not gonna have a successful transition, and we need to do this.

Uh, in Congress, uh, we need to have a generational transformational investment in clean energy. We started that with the Inflation Reduction Act. Trump is trying to get rid of it. We need to get back to that, and we have to give stronger incentives, uh, for sustainable land use so that we don't have sprawl, so we have more public transportation and people can live near where they work and afford to live near where they work and don't have to drive three or four hours every day.

With all of the negative environmental impacts that that brings. Uh, and so government can set good policies and incentives to make it easier for people to have that transition.

**Greg Dalton:** Scott, San Francisco's often seen as a climate leader. What are some areas where you think it's actually falling short?

**Scott Wiener:** Um.

Yes. we are in, in various ways, climate leader and other ways we're not. Um, and so San Francisco, for example, around housing, um, in the 1970s San Francisco, this major job center, this major public transportation center with Muni and Bart and Caltrain and all the other systems, uh, in 1970s down zone and banned.

Apartment buildings, a multi-unit dense housing in a large swath of our city, allowing only single family homes or maybe two to three unit, uh, buildings. In the neighborhood that I live in, the Castro, which has two subway stops, probably half a dozen, uh, bus lines that go through it or around it. Uh, right the geographic center of this city that's at the center of our region, uh, it was restricted to no more than three units per parcel.

And so that fuels sprawl. It fuels carbon emissions. It fuels climate change. Uh, and so in a place like San Francisco. We need to be, uh, building more housing, denser housing, more and more and more public transportation. I've been an advocate of continuing, uh, and we've done a lot of work to make it easier to build more light rail, more bus, rapid bus lines, uh, to have more subways, uh, and have more people who can live near it.

That's a critical way to lower carbon emissions. San Francisco. Uh, had, has not done that well and, and is now starting to change that with the rezoning that we just saw happen, uh, with some of the permitting reforms that we've been able to do in San Francisco. Uh, and now in November we have to save Barton Muni and Caltrain from collapsing by passing.

Uh, two revenue measures, one of which I authorized through legislation, one of which the mayor is championing. Uh, we have to step up and, and these are things that are absolutely essential.

**Greg Dalton:** Now. Saikat, you're running to succeed Nancy Pelosi. How do you rate her legacy on energy and climate?

**Saikat Chakrabarti:** Yeah, you know, I think she has been a groundbreaking leader on a lot of issues, including on climate. But in some ways, you know, the work we were trying to do with the

Green New Deal was to say we actually need to go way bigger. A lot of the climate legislation that Democrats were focused on, uh, previous to uh, 2018, was on things like cap and trade carbon taxes, and these are not bad ideas.

But they weren't going far enough. And at the time that we went into Congress in 2019, Democrats kind of had given up on climate, and it was, this wasn't Nancy Pelosi's fault, it was because of a moderate caucus within the Democratic party that didn't want to go bigger on climate. You know, Democrats had tried to pass cap and trade and that failed.

And so the overwhelming consensus was we shouldn't try to touch this. And so what we were really trying to do with the Green New Deal was to say. In fact, Democrats have to go way bigger on climate and we to make it politically palatable and also because it's the right thing to do. We have to treat the climate crisis as this massive opportunity to actually build up a new, clean, high wage industries in reverse decades of economic stagnation.

And you know, then through organizing by, you know, AOC, by having the courage to present a larger. Idea like that, challenging our own party leadership to do it. Um, that captured media attention. And then we organized, we were working with Sunrise movement at the time. They're showing up to every presidential town hall, uh, putting pressure, asking presidential candidates to respond by pitching their own ambitious climate plans.

And we were working on the inside pushing ideas like industrial policy, public financing, and that resulted. In every single president, uh, who was running at the time, responding with their own ambitious climate plans that talked about it as an as industrial policy, as a way to build up jobs, including Biden. You know, he ran on Build Back Better, that became the IRA and that passed and created the Inflation Reduction Act, which was the largest investment, uh, uh, in climate, in history. Now. I, I think the moment we're in right now, it calls for doing something even bigger. Like people are desperate for massive change, not just on climate, but on the economy.

Like this is, we're in a similar moment to what we saw after the Great Depression. When FDR came to power, when there was a far right movement back then that was filling Madison Square Garden with these huge Nazi rallies, and the way we defeated that was FDR came in with the New Deal. And you know, through the New Deal in the World War II mobilization dramatically improved people's lives through democracy.

So that is really what we have to do is not just pitch climate as a prom on its own, but also. We, you know, building the clean economy is the way for us to reverse the economic stagnation that people are feeling. And we have to do that at a national scale. It's gotta be a World War II style mobilization, but that's what, what's possible

**Greg Dalton:** Scott, what's your answer to, you're running to succeed Nancy Pelosi. How do you see her legacy on energy and climate and what would she do to change her to carry it forward?

**Scott Wiener:** Um. So, I mean, Nancy Pelosi has done such extraordinary work on issues ranging from, uh, healthcare, uh, to delivering for San Francisco. Uh, we wouldn't have the Presidio or Chrissy Field.

There's so much, many of our transit projects without, uh, Nancy. Pelosi, uh, she's been a champion and is personal for me as a gay man. Uh, uh, absolute champion for LGBTQ people. Uh, she went to the floor of Congress on her the day she was sworn in after a special election and said, I came to Congress, I've come to Congress to, to fight AIDS. Uh, it was in 1987 when I was a 17-year-old closeted gay kid, and there was a mass die off, uh, of gay men. Uh, and so, um, I, uh, admire her. Uh,

and just, she's an extraordinary person who's moved mountains for the nation and for our city. And she, uh, played an instrumental role in getting the inflation reduction act, uh, passed. Um, and so, uh, and. I also think there's always more that we can do, uh, and uh, and I intend to do that in Congress and, uh, we need to, uh, have it just an absolute, uh, transformation in terms of clean energy. Uh, we need to absolutely. Uh. Reduce sprawl and incentivize, uh, more transit oriented and job center focused housing. Uh, that has not, I think, been a top priority. Uh, for speaker Nancy Pelosi. She had other, uh, priorities. You can't always focus on everything. Uh, but that is gonna be a top priority, uh, for me.

**Greg Dalton:** Well, yeah, housing is largely seen. Uh, Scott, go, go to you. The next question. Um, housing and land use are primarily the domain of local and state governments, not federal. You know, San Francisco has some of the highest housing costs in the country, we all know. if you win the seat in Congress, how would you use Federal authority to bring down housing costs when it's not really a federal issue other than doling out dollars?

**Scott Wiener:** Well, it is a federal issue. It used to be a big federal issue, and then Ronald Reagan put a stop to that and we need to restore it. Um, when I ran for the state senate in 2016, I had. Some housing advocates who I was very close with saying, of course we'll support you, but we don't want you to run because you can't do anything about housing at the state level. It's not a state issue, it's a local issue, so you should stay local. And I said, I think you're wrong. And we have proven. Uh, them to be wrong. Um, and they've acknowledged, uh, because we, uh, use the tools that the state has in terms of requiring cities to zone for enough housing. And I've offered the law that that required San Francisco to zone for a lot of new housing. Uh, we, and we, I was able to pass, uh, state laws to require, uh, cities, uh, to stop politicizing the permitting process for housing and to go to the basic notion.

That you set the rules ahead of time, height, density, design standards, and if someone meets those standards, checks the boxes, they get their permit quickly. And so in San Francisco, we're now, we were one, we were the worst, longest permitting process in the state by far because of a law I passed. We're now one of the fastest.

So we used the tools that we have at the state level. Um, the federal government has huge ability. To make, uh, create a brighter and more, uh, affordable housing future. And I've, uh, I have a on, it's on my website, a, a housing platform first to make, uh, yes, money matters. A generational investment in housing, \$1.2 trillion over 10 years to be paid for by, uh, uh, scaling back and largely reversing.

The George W. Bush and Trump tax cuts, uh, that have probably cost us about \$10 trillion, um, to, uh, have, uh, a program for mixed income social housing, uh, and uh, to ensure that cities that are accessing that money. To build mixed income social housing, have good land use and permitting policies so that the money actually gets deployed.

Um, we also have a proposal to pay cities \$10,000 per home that actually gets built, not permitted, built in that city to give CI to really put an end to this dynamic where cities sometimes view housing as a burden. Uh, we want it to be a benefit. We need to shore up our skilled construction workforce.

And the federal government has a big role to play there, including through countercyclical investment to keep construction workers employed and not laid off every time there's an economic, uh, downturn. So there is a lot that we can do and money is part of it. Uh, but it's paired with different kinds of reforms to have more housing built.

**Greg Dalton:** Saikat, how would you address housing in federal office?

**Saikat Chakrabarti:** So first off, I mean, housing in a city, I believe the task quo is still quite broken, right? I mean, when I moved out here back in 2009. My apartment was \$500 a month, and that same place today is \$1,500 a month, and a lot of the discussion in San Francisco ends up being around zoning and permit reform.

It's good stuff. It's stuff we gotta do, but it's clearly not sufficient. It's still a case that we have. About 70,000 units in the city that have been entitled to be built, that are simply not getting built. And so we have to go way bigger. And, you know, I've got a national housing plan, uh, on my website that, uh, starts with financing because when you look at those units of housing, oftentimes they're not getting built, getting built because the cost of money is too high.

The cost of labor's too high, cost of construction's too high. And so the centerpiece of my plan is bringing back a federal financing en entity that used to exist during the New Deal in the World War II era called the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. And the RFC is kind like a public bank that could provide low cost loans to get the housing built, but it could do more than that.

It can do things like spin off public developers to build the housing if private developers won't. They can do things like. Stockpile lumber and steel to control costs and construction. And of course to do the public development part of it. We also have to repeal something called the Faircloth amendment, which is a law that got passed years ago that caps the amount of public housing and social housing can build in this country.

The second part of the plan is to also make sure we're protecting existing tenants from displacement. 'cause as we're building all this housing, we wanna make sure people can stay in the homes they're in. I call for doubling rental vouchers for federal support for tenants unions, uh, and federal support for community land trusts.

And the third piece is we do need to keep large corporations like private equity and hedge funds from buying up large swats of single family homes and driving up costs there. Now, the thing about a large plan like this is that that kind of plan's not politically possible in the current Democratic party.

I mean, even when Democrats were in power before. We didn't reverse the Bush tax cuts, right. We didn't reverse. It's, it's very difficult in the current party to do this. I mean, right now we're spending billions of dollars on this war in Iran, and Democrats have voted to expand the defense budget over years, but haven't managed to get money to get housing built.

So to do something like this, we have to change the Democratic party. So ultimately we're gonna need a new movement, and I believe that's possible today. There's candidates running. All over the country, willing to challenge the current status quo. Willing to challenge the corporate money that is profiting off of the current broken system.

And I'm organizing with them to try to go into dc, change democratic party leadership and then continue building the movement going into 2028 where we have large plans like this at the centerpiece of any democratic campaign for president and for Congress. That's what we have to do. It has to be a complete reset of what's possible there.

It's not gonna, it's not easy. I've been to dc It's not easy to go in there and just start passing big bills with the current party that's in there today.

**Greg Dalton:** Scott, Environmentalism has often been about stopping bad, saying no.

Uh, Bill McKibbin wrote an influential article saying climate movement and environmentalists need

to learn to say yes to big infrastructure projects. Do you agree, California should big build things such as high speed rail and other ambitious infrastructure projects?

**Scott Wiener:** Yes, we are not going to solve climate change without building many things. Without building a, a, an enormous amount of sustainably located housing without building massive transit infrastructure, uh, without building an enormous amount of clean energy.

And by the way, Texas and Florida both generate more clean energy than California. Um, and so we have to. We building is a critical part of solving climate change. Uh, I am someone who, if you look at my like ratings, 'cause legislators all get scored by a lot of different groups about our votes and the work we do and the bills we offer.

Um, I work very, very closely, uh, with the leading like environmental organizations and I have high scores from all the environmental groups. I was just today, the reason I was a little late, and I apologize for that, is I was up at the state capitol doing Mortal Kombat with the oil industry on a big bill to hold.

The oil industry accountable for fueling climate disasters like wildfires, because right now they, like everyone else, the victims, taxpayers, insurance policy holders, we are all stuck holding the bag because their product that they knew would do this and suppress the science is fueling. Uh, wildfires. So I do all this work and I'm, uh, and I am, and I, and I, I love our environmental partners, uh, because in the, like fifties, sixties, seventies, there were some bad things that were built.

Problem things like putting freeways through communities, et cetera. There was a reaction to it to make it as hard as possible to build anything. And a, a sort of a, a culture developed in some parts of the environmental movement to view any proposal to build anything. It starts with skepticism and then you have to prove, uh, that you shouldn't be skeptical and what that has done.

Is, it makes it really hard to build, for example, clean energy. It means that we need to, uh, really upgrade our grid, uh, by expanding the capacity of it and refurbishing and modernizing it so it can carry a lot more electricity because we have to electrify. Everything. It, it's one of the reasons why we have a massive housing shortage and why the, the law that I passed last year to require cities to allow, uh, more housing density around good public transportation was a brutal fight.

And we got it done and passed, but it was brutal. Uh, and so. Uh, we, I think in the Democratic Party, um, we have, should be advocating for, for, for building the smart and critically important things that we need to have a clean energy transition to lower carbon emissions, to make life more affordable, uh, for people.

Uh, and that's a lot of the work that I've done to try to streamline, uh, the permitting for these things. And I get more money to invest in them, and we need to take that work, uh, national, and there are more and more members of Congress who are, who get it and really want to try to make it easier to build the things we need to succeed.

**Greg Dalton:** Saikat? How would you go from no to yes?

**Saikat Chakrabarti:** So we have to build a ton of, not just infrastructure, but also industries in America. I mean, if you're, if you're serious about tackling climate change, we're talking about replacing about a billion fossil fuel emitting machines with clean ones across the That is a transformation of our entire economy. Now the good news is there is historical precedent for doing that kind of transformation. We've done it in our own, uh, history. We've largely through the World War II mobilization where. We had to rapidly build out a war economy. But if you look at every

major, uh, developed nation today, I'm talking about post-war Europe, the rich Asian countries, they all went through these phases where they dramatically transformed their economies, often within one or two generations very rapidly. And if you look at how they did it. It was in a mode of governing that's really different from how we do things today. We're trying to do all this build out with one hand tied behind our backs. We can't do it. And you know, at our think tank, at New Consensus, we've been studying this history to see how do, how did we do this stuff in the past? And government's in this mode, which we've been calling mission mode, they have three things they do that are really different from how we are, how we govern today. It. The first is usually you'll see a leader or a movement that comes into power that really sets the country on a mission, right? In our case, it was trying to beat the Nazis in World War ii, in post-war Europe. It was to rebuild after the war, uh, in a lot of Asian countries. It was just like, let's stop being poor, and they recruit civil society, be a part of that mission, and then they pa they create comprehensive plans for how to actually get this stuff done. They don't just pass policies and then take their hands off the steering wheel, as we're, we often do in this country. And then they have institutions to finance, coordinate and execute those plans. We used to have a bunch of these. The biggest by far was the Reconstruction Finance corporation I talked about earlier, but we used to have all kinds of institutions like that all across our society. And the thing is, so you mentioned high-speed rail. Of course we should be build high speed rail. But take a look at a country that actually did that successfully. So in France they built a je ve back during the seventies. And uh, you know, if you look at how they did it, it wasn't just this one rail line that they decided to build. First they pitched the entire plan to the country, and then they had industrial policy to. You know, build up the university to train up the workers who would work on the high speed rail to build up the industries that would supply the steel and all the materials to supply the high-speed rail. They built up state capacity to have the capacity to build this stuff out. It's a complete different way of doing it. And the thing is, by pitching something bigger, they had the political buy-in from the entire country to do it, and then they managed to get it done faster. That's very different from how we've done national high speed rail in California. So the counterintuitive thing here is we actually have to go bigger if we want to tackle the whole thing together. And that's possible right now, right? Like people are desperate for a real vision of how to change this stuff and it's not gonna happen through a few policies here and there, or some reforms. We have to actually have a vision for how to change the entire economy.

**Greg Dalton:** Saikat, earlier today, Leon Panetta was sitting in that chair, uh, he's a giant and the Democratic Party, and said one party rule is not good for California or any state. How would you work with Republicans to create lasting policies that advance the transition to cleaner energy?

**Saikat Chakrabarti:** So, you know, I've worked with Republicans on a whole host of issues when I was there. I mean, but not on climate. We worked on things like foreign policy where there were Republicans I worked with to try to stop the US involvement in the war on Yemen. So there are issues we can work on also on corruption, but when it comes to climate, I'm sorry to say the oil and gas industry really has bought out a large part of the Republican party and we have to defeat them at the ballot box and win. Now the thing is. We are in a moment where I believe that's possible. Like I think we're in the middle of a big realignment in this country. I mean, I brought up, uh, the Great Depression earlier and what the FDR did back then. I mean, back then, you know, Hoover was a republican Republicans had had rule in the country or for the, uh, for I believe eight years before FDR came in. But people were so desperate for change that they were willing to give the New Deal Coalition a massive victory. And if you look at the way our politics has been working right now, pretty much since the Great Recession, anybody running on bold, sweeping economic change keeps winning. That was Barack Obama in 2008. That was Donald Trump after Barack Obama. That was Biden in response to Trump, and then that was Trump again, in response to Biden, people are really open to the kind of change you're pitching. They just know that the status quo isn't working right, and so the question is, what do we pitch people after this? And then how do we actually deliver on

it? How do you use democracy to actually. Implement this stuff. So that's gonna require a real plan of what to do, and that is what, you know, the stuff I've been working on in New Consensus, the Mission for America Work, it's kinda like our version of our project 2025, but in reverse, it's like how do you actually get started on day one? Building a clean economy that works for everybody, but. I think we have to actually campaign on, you know, the stuff that we're talking about campaigning on, not just climate, it's, it's broadly popular. Like, you know, you talk about the anti-corruption issues. These are all things that 80 to 90% of Republicans agree with. If you talk about, you know, things like universal healthcare, universal childcare, these are popular issues. If you look at foreign policy. At a time where our country continues voting to expand our military budget, only 3% of Democrats and only 16% of Republicans want that to happen. So the politicians are actually quite outta step with where the broad base of people are at. And so we need a movement that is campaigning on those popular issues and then uses that to make people's lives better, and then starts defining the next political era, which is what FDR did.

**Greg Dalton:** Senator Wiener, do you agree with Leon Panetta on one party rule? And what will you do to work with Republicans?

**Scott Wiener:** Um, you know, uh, I, I think that the secret to one of the secrets to legislate or success as a legislator is, uh, it's not really a secret, but sometimes in, in, in modern, uh, US politics, it seems like it's a secret. Um, being able to work with people that you disagree with on various issues. And yes, I would love. To have more and more sort of San Francisco Bay Area, kind of, you know, uh, uh, members of Congress. Uh, in terms of folks who I agree with on the vast majority of things, uh, and we absolutely should work to elect, uh, uh, progressive, forward looking, thoughtful, smart, uh, you know, inspiring people all around the country. But the reality is this country, uh, is very, very diverse and there's gonna be a lot of different kinds of approaches, uh, in Congress, uh, in the legislature. Um, I have worked across the spectrum, uh, um, a, I'm a lefty democrat from San Francisco, and I have been able to work across the aisle with my Republican colleagues. We disagree vehemently and fight about various issues, uh, but for example, on housing, um, every major housing law that I have passed, we, I have had support from both Democratic socialist members of the legislature and mago Republican. Members of the legislature because housing affordability is a huge problem, uh, whether you are in Bakersfield or whether you are in Oakland. It is a huge problem. And so we've been able to get that broad-based support on mental health. I have been able to get broad bipartisan support when we have gone to war with the health insurance industry to force them to cover more mental health and addiction treatments. We've gotten. Both Democratic and Republican support for that and on clean energy, even though, uh, I agree with my, my opponent that the Republican party is way, is super beholden to the oil industry on so many levels, uh, and they're. Democrats who are too close to the oil industry, uh, as well. Uh, but the Republican party in particular, um, we have been able to get, uh, bipartisan support for clean energy programs that give people more independence. So I partnered with a very conservative Republican, uh, from up north. Uh, to go to war with pg and e, uh, to make it much easier for people to install, uh, basically, uh, microgrids and other kinds of like larger, uh, kinds of, uh, um, decentralized clean energy generation. Because what I, and we, what I, uh, I knew already of course, but maybe hadn't thought about it, is that farmers want to get out from underneath PG&E's heel. As much as San Francisco does. So even though we, I have not been able to get Republican support in my efforts to make it easier, uh, for San Francisco to formally break away from pg e and form a publicly owned utility, uh, we have been able to get some bipartisan support, uh, around, uh, ways to make it easier for people to generate solar and other kinds of clean energy, uh, and in Congress, even though. Uh, you know, there's a perception that there's no work across the aisle. There is, it's just not always as visible and loud as, uh, you might want it to be.

**Greg Dalton:** We're at the end. We need to, to wrap up. Um, so a recent, we'll give you about a

minute and a half for this. A recent poll found that the majority of young Americans don't think the American dream is within reach for them. That's the first time in 20 years that so many young people have felt that way. According to that poll concern about climate is one factor. If you're elected, what will you do to restore faith of young people in the California and the American dream for Scott and then Saikat?

**Scott Wiener:** Yeah. I think that there are very. Uh, some basic and some more complicated, but still critically important things that we can do, um, to make people's lives more affordable and livable and have less anxiety in people's lives. Uh, and as I said earlier, that's one of the things that drives people to take risks on who they vote for. When you have someone coming forward and say, I'm gonna make everything cheap tomorrow, even though they're gonna make things worse. Um, and so. Uh, you know, housing is absolutely part of that. We need to build millions and millions of homes to try to bring down the cost, um, investing in transit to make it easier for people to get around, not just in San Francisco as much as they want more transit in San Francisco, but in a lot of different places around the country. We need a national low cost childcare. Program, uh, the, when you have young people who are saying, I don't think I want to form a family 'cause there's no way I can afford to form a family or have a child or have that second child because I don't want to, I can't pay 30% of my salary for childcare. We need a national low cost. Access to childcare. Um, we need national paid family leave. Uh, when I was on the board of supervisors, I authored San Francisco's paid parental leave ordinance, which is the most aggressive in the country. Uh, and we need, we are like, of the wealthy countries, we're like the only one that doesn't have, uh, paid family leave, uh, as a, as a right for people and talk about a huge stress and affordability, stress in people's lives if you have, whether it's a new child. Or a sick family member. Uh, and so, uh, for all of these things, there are things that we can do. Tangible steps that we can take the Congress and the President can take to make people's lives more stable, more affordable, less anxiety, more of a willingness to say, I'm gonna start a family if I choose to do so, uh, and I'm gonna be able to afford. To do it. And of course we should not be destroying the Department of Education. We need stronger public education that is also such a stabilizing force and, and low cost access to college, particularly our public colleges.

**Greg Dalton:** Saikat?

**Saikat Chakrabarti:** yeah. Young people are exactly right to feel that. I mean, my parents came to this country with literally \$8 in their pockets, right? And they were able, you know, my dad was able to walk around Manhattan, get a job, and then on a single income, provide a middle class life for me, like I grew up. With a roof over my head with food on the table. I had a great public school education. It was a far cry than from what my dad grew up in in Calcutta. He was a refugee after partition where he, he struggled, but that whole story is pretty much dead. I mean, the American dream, the idea of the American dream is your children will do better than you. That's not the case anymore. And because that's been dying for decades. That's why we have Donald Trump in the White House. If, because people working people have been working longer and longer hours to afford less and less. And if we can't turn that around, we're gonna keep seeing authoritarians come to power. It's, we have to prove that democracy works to make your lives better. Now at San Francisco, we're basically at ground zero of all this. And in the middle of all this, we're seeing an AI revolution happening, which threatens to wipe out tons of jobs, further consolidating wealth and power into the hands of a few. And so the answer to this is not. You know, compromise with MAGA or try to go back to a pre-Trump status quo. That's not what FDR did after Great Depression. He wasn't saying, let's go back to what we had before. It is a new vision of what to do that has to center on a, we have to make the affordables, uh, the essentials affordable by directly providing them.

So that means universal healthcare. And I'm a big fan of Medicare for all universal childcare, tuition free public colleges and trade schools. It means building tons of affordable housing by having public financing and social housing in the mix and banning corporations. From buying up single family

homes, it means public power in San Francisco. 'cause they have that in other cities around California. They pay about half of what we do on their utility bills. And the second big bucket, the second big thing you have to do is, you know, tackle corruption in our government so that people will actually trust that the government can provide this stuff to And the third piece is we have to tackle the wealth and income and equality in our society head on. We have to pass a wealth tax on the billionaires and the sent millionaires in this country. And right now. There is a global green transition. It's not happening here, but it is happening all over the world. It's this huge opportunity to build up wealth for working people, and we're just completely missing the boat on it. And to do any of this, we have to completely change our foreign policy. For years under Democratic and Republican administrations, we've continued expanding our military budget, spending billions of dollars on bombs and wars abroad, instead of investing that in housing, healthcare, and education. Right here. Now everything I just listed out, it's all popular. It's all popular, not just in San Francisco, but all across the country. We just don't have the political will in DC to make it happen. And right now there's a chance to change that. I believe the way we get young people back into democratic process is you present, it's, it's not so complicated. You have to present them an actual, you know, plan of how you do it. Like, how are you gonna make life affordable again? How are you gonna be able to afford a home in your lifetime? How are you gonna be able to afford to raise a uh, raise a child? Right? And that's gonna happen not just through the policies, but through a political movement that young people have to be a part of that elects a new generation of politicians who are willing to not just challenge Republicans, but to change the Democratic party as well. And I'm seeing that happen right now. I mean, the reason I'm excited in this moment is despite everything that's going on with Trump. I have never seen a moment of change like this in my entire time working in federal politics. I mean, there's millions of people showing up to these no kings rallies. There's millions of people showing up to these anti-ice protests. This is a chance to turn that kind of popular outrage into political power in DC and then actually make life affordable for people and bring back the American dream. We can do that, but it's gonna require taking some real political risks in DC.

**Greg Dalton:** Thank you both for joining us,

**Ariana Brocious:** And that's our show. Thanks for listening. You can watch all of our SF Climate Week interviews on our youtube channel, and you can see what our team is thinking about by subscribing to our newsletter - sign up at [climate one dot org](http://climateone.org).

**Ariana Brocious:** POD version: And that's our show. Thanks for listening. Talking about climate can be hard, and exciting and interesting -- AND it's critical to address the transitions we need to make in all parts of society. Please help us get people talking more about climate by giving us a rating or review. You can do it right now on your device. Or consider joining us on Patreon and supporting the show that way.

**Ariana Brocious:** Climate One is a production of the Commonwealth Club. Our team includes Greg Dalton, Brad Marshland, Jenny Park, Austin Colón, Megan Bisciegli, Kousha Navidar and Rachael Lacey. Our theme music is by George Young. I'm Ariana Brocious.