San Francisco Chronicle

Brandon Bell/Getty Images

Gov. Gavin Newsom arrives at a rally on Nov. 8 in Houston after passage of California's redistricting referendum. Newsom said he wants Democrats to be the "Manchin-to-Mamdani party," with a wide spectrum of ideologies.

Democrats search for a path forward

Party wrestles with which candidates and messages to embrace

JOE GAROFOLI
IT'S ALL POLITICAL

Democrats have spent the past 13 months in a state of introspection, reinvention and occasionally, supine inaction. Now, as the nation's political attention turns toward the 2026 midterm elections that will determine whether President Donald Trump's agenda will continue, there's still no definitive sense of what the party should do next. Many Democrats are still wrestling with which kinds of candidates to recruit and how to focus their message. Part of the challenge is that there is a lot of overlap between many of these themes and ideas.

One faction of the party has seized on an affordability message — focusing on specific plans to bring down prices. Others say the party should push an aspirational message that would attract more working-class voters by showing how Democrats can help them reach their economic dreams — a desire the party has not addressed

well.

Republicans tapped into those aspirational dreams better in the last election. Trump won 62% of voters without college degrees.

As for candidates, some left-leaning groups want to see people run for office who have lived experience on the economic edge, while others prioritize candidates who

Stephen Lam/S.F. Chronicle

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez waves during a stop on the Fighting Oligarchy tour in April. Ocasio-Cortez showed there is an appetite for a populist message.

are "fighters" willing to aggressively challenge Trump and his party's agenda. California Gov. Gavin Newsom seized on the latter strategy to pass Proposition 50, which redrew the state's congressional districts. He's now topping polls of Democratic voters' preferred nominees for 2028.

While it may seem like a political lifetime until

the November midterms, these are actually the final days when candidates launch their runs and campaigns sharpen their messages in advance of California's June primary.

Newsom, who has not officially announced a 2028 presidential run but who has been behaving like a candidate for many

Nevada wildfire insurance law looms

Companies can opt out, similar in function to California system

By Megan Fan Munce
STAFF WRITER

In many states, certain types of risks have gotten so costly that home insurers have stopped covering them altogether — in California, it's earthquakes; in coastal Texas and Florida, it's windstorms. A new law coming in 2026 will add wildfires in Nevada to that list.

In these cases, homeowners who want or need coverage for these disasters must purchase a second policy, often from a state-created nonprofit insurer such as the California Earthquake Authority or the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association.

That's a fate some Nevada residents living in wildfire-prone areas could face with the state law taking effect on Jan. 1.

Passed this fall by the Nevada legislature, the law clarifies that insurers in the state will be allowed to remove coverage for wildfires from their policies. It also authorizes insurers to offer policies that only cover damage from wildfire. Nevada, unlike California, has no FAIR Plan equivalent already doing this.

Experts said California won't be following suit anytime soon. But in some ways, homeowners in the state are already facing a similar landscape.

Over the past five years, the California FAIR Plan has become one of the largest insurers in the

Loud generators latest hardship in outage's wake

By Megan Fan Munce, Michael Barba and Kate Talerico
STAFF WRITERS

More than a week after a massive power outage took out electricity to a third of San Francisco, residents of one neighborhood are still dealing with the aftermath: a pack of noisy generators some say are keeping them up at night.

The generators, housed in containers on truck trailers and fed by diesel fuel, were first spotted in the Richmond District last Sunday and have been running since last Monday, around the clock, as an alternative power source at Pacific Gas and Electric Co.'s substation at 24th Avenue and Balboa Street.

"We have seven 2 megawatt generators onsite to provide temporary power for customers impacted by Saturday's large San Francisco outage," PG&E officials said Friday afternoon in a statement to the Chronicle. "These units were put into service on

INSIDE

Richmond, Sunset lose power for second Saturday; PG&E faces mounting backlash, questions. **A7**

Putting some 'art' in artificial intelligence

By Lily Janiak
THEATER CRITIC

Thirteen people in their 20s and 30s got their instructions: circle up, make eye contact and give each other nonsense compliments.

"You are a really excellent blacksmith," said one, "The way you hug raccoons is just mind-blowing," said another.

It was a riff on the classic theater game zip-zap-zop. But this improv class, led by instructor Radhika Rao at the Noe Valley public library, had itself been generated by an unusual new prompt. Rao had been hired by an AI company.

Earlier this year, the performer and improviser started working on a contract basis with a company called 222, a Y-Combinator-backed startup that bills itself as an AI marketplace for real-life social experiences. First the technology scans users' demographic responses to group them with likely friend candidates; then artists (among other professionals) lead group activities to help that crew bond.

The standard take on artificial intelligence and artists is that the technology steals copyrighted work and replaces jobs, devaluing human craft in

Jana Ašenbrennerová/For the S.F. Chronicle

Radhika Rao leads exercises that bring human connection practices to AI-mediated social spaces — work she calls "anti-loneliness."

WEATHER: Lots of sunshine. Highs: 52-62. Lows: 36-45. **B6**