



POWERING PA:

WHAT DATA CENTERS MEAN FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S ENERGY, ECONOMY, AND COMMUNITIES

It's hard to avoid news about AI and data centers. Right now, there are 113 data centers in Pennsylvania. Think of these massive facilities as where the internet physically lives. Data center development is exploding due to the increased use of AI like ChatGPT. But what do they really mean for our towns, water sources, and job opportunities?

Read below for facts and talking points about data centers in our communities – and what we're demanding from Pennsylvania leaders.

FAQS

Don't data centers provide much-needed economic opportunities and investment for smaller and rural communities?

Despite big promises, data centers produce very few permanent jobs – and they're not high-paying tech jobs. While a factory might need thousands of workers to operate, most **data centers only need about 100.**

In terms of investment, data centers are highly subsidized by the very taxpayers they claim to help – and **some states have found they actually LOSE money** on every dollar they spend on a data center tax break. Plus communities have to deal with the fallout if a center is eventually abandoned.

To put it bluntly: for the most part, communities bear the costs while corporations rake in the profits.

What's the controversy around data centers and the environment?

Data centers require massive amounts of water and energy to operate. That means they stress local water supplies. Plus wastewater flowing from the facilities can pollute rivers, streams, and groundwater – and that's not even counting the waste like old servers that companies dump in local landfills.

Data centers often run on dirty fossil fuels, worsening our environment and air quality. And while they can require new transmission lines, **there are no rules in place to make them pay for their own infrastructure.**

They also damage our forests, cause noise and light pollution, and replace our farmland and green spaces.



What is “dark data” and what does it have to do with data centers?

Dark data is all the data that organizations collect but don't use, process, or analyze. Despite being unnecessary, dark data still takes up space on servers and requires tons of energy to store. Supporters of data centers say they're needed to run our modern world – but they should be minimizing this “e-waste.” It hurts our environment while serving no purpose!

What should a community know before signing off on a new data center?

If there's going to be a data center in your community, developers and state and local leaders need to share:

- The facility's expected water usage and where the water will come from
- Impacts on the local ecosystem and wildlife
- The amount of noise and light pollution
- Expected air pollution from fuel emissions
- Whether the company is receiving tax breaks
- How much farmland, forest, or open space will be paved over
- Any plans to decrease unnecessary use of AI and “e-waste” like dark data

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Talk to your state lawmakers – tell them what we expect about rules around data centers in Pennsylvania:

- State agencies should immediately begin tracking use of natural resources like water.
- Statewide legislation must ensure all costs be borne (and secured by bond) by the investors, NOT local and Pennsylvania residents. This includes buildings and additions, transmission lines, security and safety (fire and police departments), water access, infrastructure and processing, shutdown and abandonment.
- Statewide agencies and taskforces must follow up with data center owners on a six-month to yearly basis to establish compliance.
- Make sure localities are given full legal authorities over data center construction, operational safety, and close-down plans and actions.
- Require plans for reducing the data dark kept by data centers.

