



PennFuture Supports a Statewide Moratorium on Data Center Development

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 — PennFuture calls for a statewide moratorium —or pause— on data center development until state lawmakers can adopt strict policies that ensure data centers are sited properly, have regulated water usage, and bring their own clean energy. It’s critical that Pennsylvania sets guardrails in place before a surge of data centers are built so that our electricity grid can be maintained, ratepayer impacts are constrained, and our air, water, and climate pollution problems don’t get worse.

Data centers pose unique challenges to every level of government. While every new industry brings new concerns, data center facilities are unconstrained by traditional economic factors and can be built at a speed that cannot be matched by decisionmakers. Data centers pose numerous challenges for local communities, from poor siting and local air and noise pollution, to high water usage and grid-scale power impacts. While our leaders – both elected and appointed – debate the merits of this industry, the basic fact remains that our laws are ill-equipped to protect Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvanians are aware of the danger of unchecked development and are still reeling from the sprawl of warehouses and logistics centers negatively impacting our communities. Of the numerous data centers proposed across Pennsylvania, more than 20 are “hyperscale” facilities. These represent a particular threat due to the sheer size of the facility and the scale of their impact, where water and energy use may rival small cities. But these facilities are coming to a state where our electric grid is already strained due to increased demand and overreliance on unreliable fossil fuels, causing electricity bills to skyrocket and prompting new fears about our ability to keep the lights on. While Pennsylvania is fortunate to possess abundant water resources, it also suffers from drought and its lasting effects. There are very real risks associated with an industry that could pull billions of gallons of water every year to keep its facilities cool.

PennFuture is actively working in the halls of state government to advocate for real protections from this extractive industry.



We have provided testimony and comments to the Pennsylvania state House of Representatives, the Pennsylvania state Senate, and the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. We have drafted new legislation and amendments to strengthen bills currently under consideration. Our priorities are clear and follow four principles. The state must pass data center policies that:

1. Provide meaningful protection of our public natural resources and our constitutional right to clean air and pure water as provided under Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania state Constitution.
2. Ensure that existing utility customers are not subsidizing costs associated with data center buildout.
3. Require facilities to demonstrate that they have secured the necessary power to support their operations before these facilities are connected to the grid.
4. Promote the development of new, clean energy sources to increase grid reliability and lower electricity costs for Pennsylvanians.

Numerous lawmakers have introduced proposals that could address these core principles, and the state House of Representatives is actively debating a handful of bills that could provide significant progress in Pennsylvania's efforts to more effectively regulate this industry. We are encouraged that so many lawmakers recognize the challenges presented by data centers, but very real questions exist around the ability of our divided state government to timely pass policies that embody these principles.

Massive data center facilities are already coming to Pennsylvania. We must face the prospect of this development directly and enact meaningful policies to mitigate the harm that they can cause *before they are built in all corners of the Commonwealth*. There are conversations and debates happening in Harrisburg right now, and numerous legislative and regulatory proposals have been announced. Lawmakers must engage in an open and transparent process that is responsive to legitimate concerns about this industry.

PennFuture does not call lightly for a moratorium. We do, however, recognize the very real threats posed by hyperscale data center development and that the state must give communities and their elected officials the time necessary to act. Until lawmakers enact policies that achieve the four principles above, data center development shouldn't be allowed in Pennsylvania.