

Data Center Moratorium Testimony Sample Talking Points

Data centers strain the power grid and drive up Oregon's energy consumption unsustainably. Conventional data centers have an average of 25 megawatts of power capacity, whereas the average house draws around 1.5 kilowatts on the grid at any given time. One conventional data center consumes the same amount of electricity to power roughly 20,000 homes. Hyperscale data center energy consumption is around 100 megawatts; the largest data center energy consumption is around 5,000 megawatts.

Power consumption in Oregon is already up 30% from 2010, most of that increase in the past few years. AI computing data centers are expected to double the state's energy consumption over the next five years, while upgrades to the electrical grid are happening at a much slower rate.

Noise pollution from data centers has real, documented adverse health outcomes for the communities living around them. Residents of existing data centers across the country are raising concerns about constant noise pollution from these operations. The cooling systems, fans, and diesel generators all contribute to a constant hum that is carried hundreds of meters away from these data centers. Communities around existing data centers have reported "headaches, vertigo, nausea, sleep disturbances, ear pain and hypertension" from nearby data centers. Residents in Loudoun County, Virginia have reported "debilitating" noise from nearby data centers.

Data centers pollute enormous amounts of water, and nearly 90% of Oregon is experiencing drought conditions. In a report by the University of Georgia, up to 90% of data centers worldwide use a water-based cooling system. Approximately 57% of all data centers use potable water to cool their servers, and up to 90% of that water is pulled from the surrounding watersheds (from lakes, rivers, or aquifers). Data centers in Loudoun County, Virginia, collectively used over 900 million gallons of water in 2023 alone.

Water which has been used to cool data centers has been linked to increased concentration of water contaminants such as nitrates and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), as well as thermal pollution by introducing warmer water back into the watershed. At the time of this writing, over 88% of the state of Oregon was experiencing drought conditions which would further be exacerbated by significant additional water consumption. In a report published earlier this year, over 500 new AI data centers are being built in drought-stricken areas of the U.S., and at the time of writing, 99.9% of Lane County residents are experiencing drought conditions.

Proper safeguards are not in place. Putting proper legislative guardrails into place at the state level will take time. We simply cannot sacrifice any other community with these known impacts from data centers in the interim period. This is why a temporary moratorium is urgently and

immediately needed to pause the planning of any potential data center until the proper safeguards are in place to ensure communities are protected from the real health and environmental impacts from this type of development.

We need this pause to start immediately as data center developers have been known to speed up their application processes ahead of any proposed moratoriums.