United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Burgum,

On September 18, The Washington Sun reported that the Trump administration is preparing to develop new, privately-owned data centers and related infrastructure on nearly 18,000 acres of public lands for the across six western states, including Oregon, Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Arizona.

Recently, the Department of the Interior (DOI) released limited details regarding meetings that you have taken over the last year and a half with wealthy data center developers and investors. The timing of these meetings taking place concurrently with the administration's efforts to pursue data center development on public lands raises serious questions about your involvement in these deals. The complete lack of transparency regarding these actions compounds our concerns.

The numerous risks posed to communities by rapid data center development are well-documented. These projects are consuming unprecedented amounts of water, further exacerbating drought conditions in the West, and driving up energy costs for millions of Americans. Effectively privatizing public lands owned by American taxpayers sends a clear message that the Trump administration continues to prioritize the profits of tech CEOs and shareholders over the American people that rely on public lands for hunting, fishing, recreation, and livestock grazing.

Moreover, the extent of harm to our communities cannot be fully known when the DOI has failed to meaningfully consult with tribes and provide details and opportunity to comment to the public.

Given Congress's role in funding and conducting oversight over the responsible management of public lands, the DOI has an obligation to respond to Congressional oversight inquiries.

For all of these reasons, we demand that you immediately cease all efforts to hijack public lands for the development of data centers, and urge you to provide full transparency on your role in the DOI's efforts to site data centers with a written response no later than November 16, 2026.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Alex Padilla
United States Senator