

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 2, 2026

Margaret Hoffman, Northwest Power and Conservation Council – Co-Chair
Michael Jung, Energy and Climate Policy Professional – Co-Chair
Dan Dorran, Commission Chair, Umatilla County – Member
Greg Dotson, Associate Professor, University of Oregon - Member
Bill Edmonds, Adjunct Professor, University of Portland - Member
Tim Miller, Director, Oregon Business for Climate – Member
Jean Wilson, Operating Partner, Sandbrook Capital – Member

Dear Members of the Oregon Data Center Advisory Committee,

Thank you for coming together to tackle the challenges posed by the rapid expansion of data centers in Oregon. While we acknowledge that data centers are critical to American national security, can help ensure technological advancement, and create good union jobs, your work to strike a balance between pursuing economic development opportunities in alignment with sustainable utility costs and environmental impacts is critical for Oregon and the Northwest. Several issues have been raised by constituents regarding responsible data center development with our offices, ranging from local to state to federal jurisdiction. As you develop recommendations, we respectfully ask that you take into consideration the following concerns that have been brought to our attention and communicate opportunities to partner on solutions.

1. Increasing Energy Demand

Data centers use large amounts of energy to power and cool equipment. As data centers proliferate, additional energy production and transmission capacity are needed to meet growing energy demand. We have heard concerns that the development of transmission lines must be transparent and clear, particularly around any use of eminent domain. There are also concerns reported that the increased energy demand will put increased pressure on the hydropower system, further threatening endangered salmon.

2. Increasing Electricity Costs

Oregonians are being hit hard by rising energy costs. Nationwide there have been reports of energy costs rising as a direct result of increased demand by data centers. Oregonians are concerned about rising energy costs that get passed onto consumers and communities as a result of data centers. Oregon has already been a leader in responding to concerns that families should not be forced to pay higher costs as a result of data centers in their communities. The passage of the POWER Act established a separate rate class for data centers to ensure fairness for residential ratepayers in some urban areas. Despite progress, there is continued concern among Oregon families about increasing utility costs and increasing utility shutoff rates, and every effort should be made to keep costs down for families and small businesses.

3. Water Quality and Quantity

Data centers typically use large volumes of water to cool servers and prevent overheating. This water is usually drawn from surface, ground, municipal or reclaimed water sources. Large data centers can consume up to 5 million gallons of water per day, the equivalent to the water use of a

town of 10,000 to 50,000 people. Oregonians remain strongly concerned that the amount of water a data center uses could lead to municipal or agricultural water shortages and impact wastewater systems. Furthermore, there are concerns that data center operations can concentrate contaminants and exacerbate existing contamination issues. This is especially important to address as Oregon faces persistent drought and heightened wildfire risk.

4. Visibility and Noise Pollution

There are also concerns over environmental impacts that data centers can have on the atmosphere. There have been reports that flight patterns in The Dalles have been disrupted due to visibility issues from steam coming from a data center. There are also reports of noise pollution. Data centers can emit persistent sounds from cooling systems and fans that can be heard in the surrounding community. Noise pollution can increase stress and blood pressure and decrease the property value of homes and businesses nearby. It is important that these impacts are sufficiently addressed.

5. Land Use Decisions

The development of data centers raises important land use questions. Oregonians have concerns that productive agricultural land will be rezoned to make way for data centers, altering the character and economies of their communities. The decisions about where to site data centers matter and it is important to account for competing uses in a thoughtful and intentional process.

6. Tribal Rights and Consultation

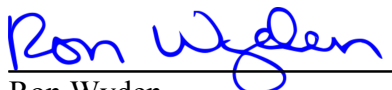
It is paramount that tribes are meaningfully consulted in the siting of data centers that may impact tribal resources. Data centers have been placed on lands where tribal members retain treaty rights, including rights to hunt, fish, and gather food and medicine. Tribes must be meaningfully consulted in siting decisions to avoid serious harm to these communities.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

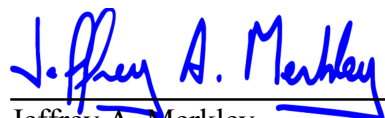
Many Oregonians have also expressed serious concerns regarding a lack of transparency of the environmental and infrastructure impacts that data centers have on their communities. Transparent information is critical to sustainable planning for a community's future energy and water needs, and to assess impacts to utilities and municipal services.

We are grateful for your work to embody the "Oregon Way" to hear from all perspectives and chart a path forward. We stand ready to partner with you on data center policies best for Oregon.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator