

Letter to Congressional Leadership: Regulating AI & Data Centers

Prepared by the Center for Biological Diversity and co-signed by the Center for a Sustainable Coast and 200 other non-profit organizations across the nation.

October 7, 2025

To: Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries

On behalf of more than 200 organizations and the millions of members we represent, **we respectfully urge you to oppose any policy that would erode or preempt federal or state regulation of the artificial intelligence (AI) industry, including data centers.**

Earlier this year, the Senate decisively and bipartisanly rejected a provision in the House-passed reconciliation bill which would have instated a 10-year moratorium on state authority to regulate the AI industry. We implore you to show the same leadership by opposing any effort by any Member of Congress or the Trump Administration to weaken or preempt state and federal regulation of AI — including in must-pass legislation such as the National Defense Authorization Act, or in stand-alone bills, such as Senator Cruz’s recently introduced SANDBOX Act, which would allow AI companies to bypass federal regulation for up to 10 years, with further potential for permanent regulation repeal or amendment.

Any waiver or moratorium on state and federal regulatory authority would be a sweeping concession to large technology corporations at the expense of addressing the climate crisis, environmental justice and protection, public health, workers’ rights, and children’s safety, all while raising energy prices and threatening the stability of the electric grid. At a time of rapid growth in the AI industry and [rising public concern](#) about AI data centers, it would be extraordinarily irresponsible to preempt state and federal regulatory authority and allow the industry to grow unchecked — community safety and health are at stake.

Without intervention, global power demand from data centers is projected to rise by [50% by 2027 — and up to 165% by 2030](#) — much of it fueled by coal, oil, and gas, as well as other dirty energy sources like biomass and nuclear. Meaningful federal and state regulation of the AI industry is urgently needed. If not addressed appropriately, this surge in AI data centers — amid extreme weather, aging infrastructure, and ongoing energy policy challenges driven by climate change and inequality — will increase:

- **Climate and Environmental Damage:** AI data centers’ soaring electricity demand is driving the development of over [10,800 MW](#) of new fossil fuel capacity as of early 2025, locking in climate emissions and delaying the clean energy transition. The AI lifecycle — from microchip manufacturing to training large models in energy-intensive data centers — emits significant air pollution. Expanding infrastructure drives habitat loss and ecosystem fragmentation, threatening biodiversity and endangered species.
- **Environmental Injustice and Public Health Harms:** The rapid growth of AI data centers places a high cost on low-income and marginalized communities. It increases pollution and perpetuates pollution hotspots, consumes immense amounts of fresh water, and makes life even less affordable for those already struggling to make ends meet.

Training a single AI model can match the pollution of [10,000](#) cross-country car trips, with fine particulate matter posing serious health risks for low-income communities. By 2030, AI-driven data centers could cause [1,300](#) premature deaths annually and \$20 billion in U.S. health costs from cancers, asthma, and lost productivity. At the same time, data centers provide questionable economic benefit: they [create few permanent jobs](#); [deepen economic inequality](#); and their heavy demand on local power grids delays or blocks more sustainable development, including [housing](#).

- **Energy Unaffordability:** The escalating deployment of AI data centers significantly increases electricity demand, necessitating substantial and costly upgrades to America's aging grid infrastructure. These [costs](#) are passed on to ratepayers by utilities, resulting in higher electricity prices for entire communities. For example, electricity bills are on track to rise an average of 8% nationwide by [2030](#) and as much as 25% in places like Virginia because of data centers.
- **Reduced Power Quality and Availability:** Utilities are increasingly prioritizing electricity for data centers over other consumers, a shift that threatens to destabilize local grids and raises the risk of blackouts, electrical fires, and damage to household appliances. By [2026](#), data centers, including those powering AI, are projected to consume around 1,050 terawatt-hours of electricity annually — equivalent to the entire consumption of Germany.
- **Water Inaccessibility:** AI data centers consume enormous amounts of fresh water to cool their servers. For instance, generating a single 100-word email with OpenAI's GPT-4 requires roughly the equivalent of a [16.9-ounce water bottle](#). This strain is especially concerning as developers continue to site large data centers in drought-prone regions such as Arizona and Nevada, where water is already scarce and vulnerability to climate stress is already increasing.

It is essential that federal and state governments retain uncompromised authority to regulate the AI industry to protect ratepayers, communities, and the environment, and to effectively respond to emerging challenges. We once again urge you to reject any and all legislation or Trump Administration initiative that hampers this authority.