

Data centers must be held accountable, Jesup Press-Sentinel, 12-4-25

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OPINION

Data centers must be held accountable

Georgia faces daunting challenges in attempting to achieve timely transition to clean energy and reliable environmental management. These efforts are made significantly more difficult by conflicting business interests. Preventing the ongoing degeneration of our natural resources and life-support systems is undermined by short-term profitmaking ventures that finance immense corporate political influence, dangerously delaying or discrediting well-justified policy reforms.

It's not surprising that Georgia's ranking as the nation's most 'business-friendly' state is achieved with trade-offs that persistently oppose actions to improve the accountability of economic development. Unfortunately, being business-friendly has been achieved by unfairly shifting both economic and environmental costs of development onto taxpayers and citizens.

By promoting datacenters with tax-breaks, low-cost labor and infrastructure, as well as energy made cheaper for industry by increasing residential power-bills, Georgia is risking the depletion of state water resources and unfairly endangering other water-dependent activities. Moreover, with approval of the Public Service Commission, Georgia Power is planning to burn polluting, heat-trapping fossil-fuels to generate most of the 10,000 megawatts of electricity to be demanded by data-storage facilities.

Although it's commendable that General Assembly members are proposing much-needed controls on social networking, ensuring data-center accountability is equally urgent. Decisions about data centers and other major development projects must be diligently regulated through mandatory, publicly reviewed assessment and monitoring of the consequences – on public health, property value, energy costs, water supplies, wildlife, and environmental quality.

Proposals for data centers and other key ventures must also employ clean energy, paid for by investors. Georgians must not suffer the burdens of business expansion.

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