

December 15, 2024

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*Delivered via email*

Dear President Biden, Chief of Staff Zients, National Security Advisor Sullivan, and Director Brainard:

On behalf of millions of members and supporters, we write to express our deep alarm regarding reports that the Administration is considering extraordinary action to fast-track an electric power buildout for data centers by cutting corners on permitting and environmental protections.

Many of us have already written to you regarding the major threats and problems posed by data-center power demand, which are threatening regular people with increased electricity prices, drastically undermining climate goals by keeping coal-fired power plants open and expanding gas-fired plants, creating major nuisances and

pollution for local communities, and are harming national parks and other protected lands.

This massive spike in energy demand is being driven by some of the wealthiest corporations in the world, including several that this Administration has investigated or pursued for anti-competitive business practices. An enormous energy giveaway to these corporations at the expense of consumers, a habitable climate, and local communities would be unconscionable and inexcusable—a sharp deviation from this Administration’s policies that could not only diminish, but deeply undermine, its historically significant climate achievements.

The Administration has an opportunity to make valuable progress for the climate, workers, and consumers if these data centers are to be built. To realize that potential, any move by the Administration must at a minimum do the following:

- Require that all new electricity production be renewable.
- Require big tech firms—not residential consumers—to cover all costs for the new power.
- Embrace the [recent FERC order disallowing any cost shifting to consumers](#) that occurs when existing generation capacity is diverted from the grid to serve data center load.
- Disallow any data center that relies upon natural gas from obtaining national security waivers or any other regulatory benefit.
- Provide voice and choice to local communities that might be burdened or harmed by data center-build-outs.
- Ensure good jobs at these power facilities, including paying living wages, respecting the right to organize and collectively bargain, ensuring worker health and safety, preventing discrimination, and implementing robust grievance mechanisms.
- Require strong commitments from Big Tech firms and utilities that secure these conditions—contractual commitments if possible and, in any event, strong public commitments, to guard against the firms reneging and seeking a raw giveaway at the expense of the American public from the incoming Administration.

**Advancing climate and other goals.** A massive, federally driven build-out of clean energy would advance climate goals by helping critical industries scale up more rapidly.

Moreover, to the extent that extraordinary federal action on powering data centers is driven by urgent, legitimate national security or defense concerns, it is too important

to be left to fossil fuels. Renewable energy is quicker to deploy and less costly than fossil fuel infrastructure, and the resulting power supply would be more stable, secure, and immune to the price instability and geopolitical problems that plague fossil fuels. In short, if the nation is to undertake a massive power buildout for national security or defense purposes, then the only sensible energy sources are those that can be built the most quickly at the lowest cost, will have stable low prices over time, and are the least subject to disruption by extreme weather, terrorism, or foreign or domestic market manipulation.

**Big Tech footing the bill.** Requiring energy-hungry Tech firms to fund the build-out of data center infrastructure would place the costs where they belong, relieving American families and state and local governments from the burdens of being played off one another and subsidizing wealthy corporations. It is bad policy to force everyday consumers to subsidize the largest corporations in the world for any reason. To make them shoulder the costs of powering a technology that is designed to maximize profits for those corporations at the consistent expense of a functioning internet, job security in dozens of professions, healthy political discourse, and a livable future would only compound the harm.

**Responsible fast-tracking.** Federal leadership on faster, more efficient processes to responsibly deploy clean energy more rapidly without sacrificing local communities or boosting fossil fuel production could help break well-known logjams on permitting and interconnection.

Before making any decisions in this critical area of national interest, we urge you to engage with stakeholders representing people who will be impacted by these policies. And we implore you not to transform this Administration's legacy into one of pioneering energy infrastructure that privileges a few massive corporations' efforts to secure public subsidies for private gain while sticking ordinary Americans with higher energy bills and a more damaged world.

Sincerely,

Public Citizen

Accountable Tech

AI Now Institute

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Athena Coalition  
Amazon Employees for Climate Justice  
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network  
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate  
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Digital Democracy  
Center for Justice & Democracy  
Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
Clean Elections Texas  
Clean Energy Action  
Climate Hawks Vote  
Climate Mobilization MoCo  
CO Democratic Party - Energy & Environment Initiative  
Coalition to Protect PWC  
Demand Progress Education Fund  
Earth Ethics, Inc.  
Earthjustice  
Empower Our Future  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Evergreen Action  
Fight for the Future  
Friends Acting for Climate Today  
Friends of the Earth  
Georgia Clinicians for Climate Action

Georgia WAND Education Fund Inc  
Good Jobs First  
Green America  
Greenpeace USA  
Habitat Recovery Project  
Indivisible HoCoMD Environmental Action  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Institute for Local Self-Reliance  
Kentucky Conservation Committee  
League of Conservation Voters  
Loudoun Climate Project  
Loudoun Transmission Line Alliance  
Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
MARBE SA  
Maryland Legislative Coalition  
Maryland Legislative Coalition - Climate Justice Wing  
MediaJustice  
Methane Action  
Mobilize Frederick  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
National Black Justice Collective  
Nature Forward  
Nuclear Information and Resource Service  
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light  
People's Tech Project  
Presente.org  
Prince William Conservation Alliance

Protect Catlett

Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights

Rappahannock Tribe

Revolving Door Project

Save Ohio Parks

Sierra Club

Stand.earth

Sugarloaf Alliance

The Tech Oversight Project

United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry

Venice Resistance

Vessel Project of Louisiana

Virginia Native Plant Society

Waterkeepers Chesapeake

Womxn From The Mountain

WorkForClimate.org

Young, Gifted & Green

Concerned Citizens Chalk Level

350 Colorado

350 Yakima Climate Action

350 Hawaii