Senate Democrats’ report says AI data centre firms are not paying their full grid costs

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Source: https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/ai-data-center-companies-reveal-to-warren-blumenthal-van-hollen-they-are-not-paying-their-full-costs-will-continue-using-ndas-and-seeking-tax-breaks/

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AI Data Center Companies Reveal to Warren, Blumenthal, Van Hollen They Are Not Paying Their Full Costs, Will Continue Using NDAs and Seeking Tax Breaks

Oct. 9, 2026 • Original Press Release (Publisher's Website)

Amid increasing concerns over utility costs and other data center problems, the report finds that the “data center industry is bulldozing local communities… leaving ordinary citizens stuck with the bills.” Warren releases 27-page report with findings of investigation of AI data center operators Text of Report (PDF) Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) released a new report, Power and Profits: How the AI Data Center Boom Costs Households and Communities, containing the findings of their nearly yearlong investigation into how AI data centers raise costs for communities. The report found that Big Tech data center companies are not doing enough to pay their “‘fair share,’ and … continue to aggressively seek financial subsidies from residential ratepayers and state and local governments. This leaves ratepayers, taxpayers, and local communities shouldering many of the costs while Big Tech reaps the benefits.” On December 15, 2025, the lawmakers sent letters to Amazon, Google, Meta, Microsoft, CoreWeave, Digital Realty, and Equinix, requesting detailed information on their plans to mitigate their data centers’ impact on local communities following reports of data centers driving up residential utility costs. The Senators’ staff supplemented this investigation with additional information obtained from interviews and discussions with representatives of these companies over the past year. The investigation reveals that some of the wealthiest companies in the world are not doing enough to pay the full costs of their data center development and in fact continue to aggressively seek financial subsidies from residential ratepayers and state and local governments. Specific topline findings of this investigation include:

1. The data center companies are not paying their “fair share.” While the data center companies publicly claim they support paying the energy costs required to serve their facilities, all data center developers made clear that their commitments to paying their “full energy costs” and “full cost of service” refer to the costs of infrastructure exclusively benefitting them and do not cover the full spectrum of costs that data centers impose on residential ratepayers. The companies broadly opposed “but-for” cost allocation standards requiring them to pay the full cost of any upgrades triggered by their facilities — upgrades that would not have been needed but for the existence of the data center—instead arguing that these costs should be shared by all ratepayers. Moreover, while the companies point to new state regulations as sufficient to prevent costs from being shifted onto consumers, they regularly lobby state legislatures for more favorable terms, including through playing states off of each other by threatening to move elsewhere. “[T]he companies commit to paying for infrastructure that solely benefits them, but dispute how much they should pay for shared infrastructure that is paid for by all ratepayers but was only built to accommodate the data center,” wrote the senators.

2. Data centers avoid scrutiny by seeking NDAs that limit community input on AI data center locations and impacts. All four Big Tech companies routinely request nondisclosure agreements from utility companies, landowners, other commercial partners, and in some cases even government officials. Several of the Big Tech companies explicitly acknowledged that the goal of requesting NDAs with public officials is to limit public scrutiny by preventing the local community from learning about the project.

For example, Meta stated that “[m]aintaining confidentiality during project development increases efficiency and speed by enabling all stakeholders to remain focused on the needs of a proposed project,” implicitly excluding local residents from the group of relevant stakeholders.

3. The data center companies continue to aggressively seek tax breaks that cost states billions in lost revenue

while providing little evidence of economic benefits. While the developers surveyed often downplayed or avoided acknowledging the billions of dollars in tax incentives they receive from state and local communities throughout the Congressional inquiry, in practice, they actively seek out lucrative tax incentive packages. They acknowledged that they will continue to request and accept sales tax exemptions on chips and other equipment, the most valuable form of tax break for data centers. Despite accepting billions of dollars in financial subsidies from state governments, none of the seven companies surveyed were able or willing to offer comprehensive quantitative evidence on full-time job creation at their facilities.

This investigation made clear that the industry receives enormous handouts while making questionable claims about paying its fair share of electricity costs, using NDAs to keep communities in the dark, accepting billions in tax incentive packages from state and local communities, and failing to provide clear evidence of permanent jobs or economic development benefits where data centers are built. “In sum, this investigation finds the data center industry is bulldozing local communities and using their economic resources to play states and local communities against one another, creating a race to the bottom in which state and local policymakers feel they have no choice but to accede to the data centers’ demands — and leaving ordinary citizens stuck with the bills,” concluded the senators. ###

All official press releases from Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D -MA)

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