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GUARDRAILS UP: AT LEAST 21 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNORS AND GOVERNORS-ELECT WANT DATA CENTERS TO USE CLEAN ENERGY AND PAY THEIR OWN WAY

Two-thirds of Americans want data centers running on clean energy, according to a recent AP-NORC poll, and once all newly elected governors are sworn in next year, 21 states will be represented by governors committed to making data centers pay their own way, run on clean power to prevent an epidemic of air pollution, and answer to the communities they move into.

Wisconsin governor-elect David Crowley defeated his opponent by nearly nine points with one of the strongest data center policies in the country. Crowley says that as governor he will first "let communities decide for themselves whether they want a data center at all," and, if they do, that the data center developer must provide 100% renewable energy. In Nevada, governor-elect Aaron Ford's data center accountability plan includes "requiring data centers to provide and pay for their own clean energy usage." And Georgia's governor-elect Keisha Lance Bottoms said she is in "complete alignment" with Georgia PSC commissioner Peter Hubbard, whose policy proposal requires data centers to use clean energy and pay for the infrastructure.

In New Jersey and Virginia, where Governors Mikie Sherrill and Abigail Spanberger ran and won on clean energy last November, they have followed through and enacted strong data center guardrails. Governor Spanberger's data center rules reward companies for bringing their own clean power, and Governor Sherrill's data center plan includes incentivizing data centers "to bring in cheap, clean power to the grid," and "putting power back in the hands of communities."

Trump and Republicans are now more out of step than ever as they continue to give data center companies a blank check – driving up utility bills, polluting the air, and straining water supplies and electric grids with no limit. Clean energy, community input, and bring your own power guardrails are officially the new normal when it comes to data center policy.

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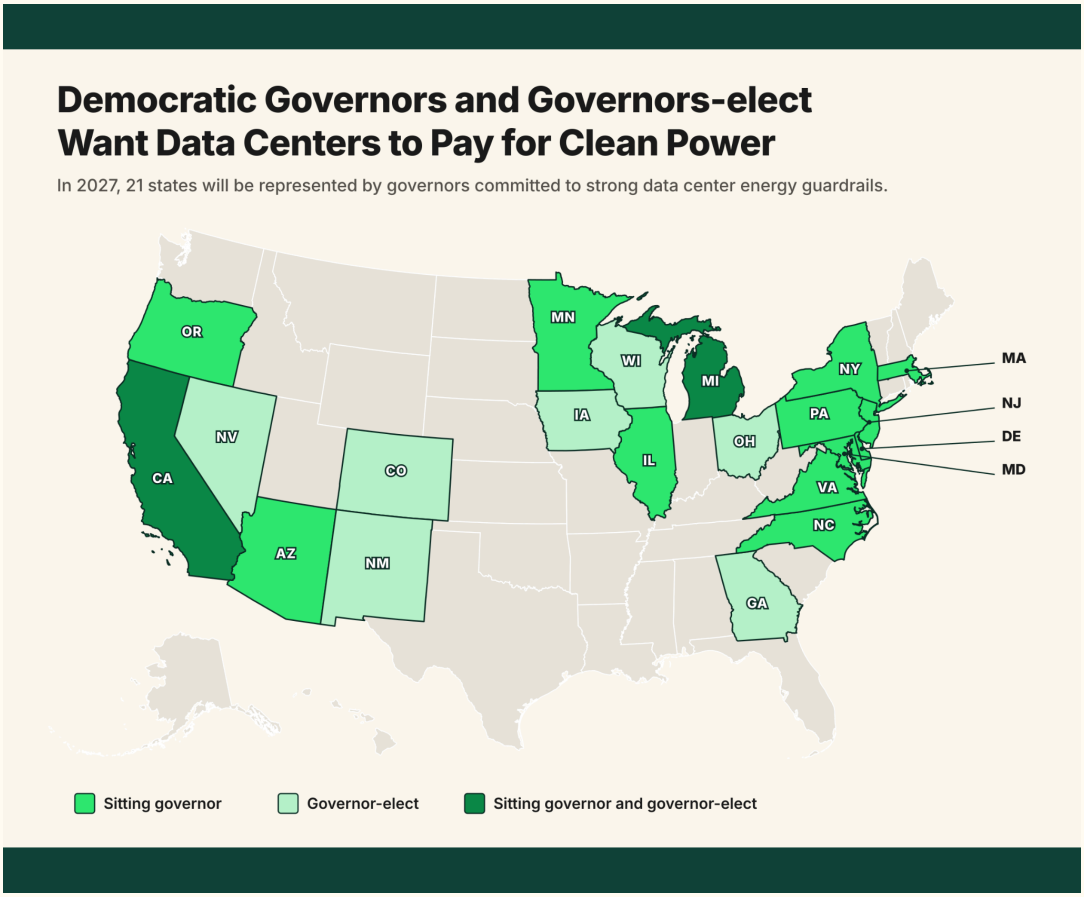

Ten newly elected Democratic governors have called for clean energy guardrails for data centers:

California

California Governor-elect Xavier Becerra's AI plan includes clean energy guardrails for data centers.

> ***"I will pursue an economic-forward standard: data centers that operate in California add value to our current energy infrastructure, are powered with clean energy, cover the costs of their own energy needs, and meet environmental performance disclosure requirements."***
>
> – CAMPAIGN PLATFORM, 2026

Colorado

Colorado Governor-elect Phil Weiser said state level data center guardrails will be a top priority for him.

> ***"There needs to be a protection so communities don't feel like these data centers have been shoved down their throats. They're able to be heard ... We also need to make sure on data centers that our electricity rates are not getting hiked up because we're paying for these data centers. We need to make sure we've locked that down. And finally, we've got key protections for clean energy, for water, and data centers can't undermine those as well."***
>
> – INTERVIEW, OCT. 14, 2026

Georgia

At a campaign event with Public Service Commissioner Peter Hubbard, Georgia Governor-elect Keisha Lance Bottoms' said she was:

> ***"In complete alignment" with Hubbard's policy proposals targeting data centers, which included requiring them to use clean energy and pay for the infrastructure.***
>
> – PRESS CONFERENCE, SEPT. 14, 2026

Iowa

Iowa Governor-elect Rob Sand's "Plan to Hold Big Corporations and Data Centers Accountable" includes a number of energy guardrails. The plan's commitment to enact strong consumer protections says:

> ***"As governor, I'd implement [Integrated Resource Planning] to ensure utilities are accountable, customers (including data centers) only pay for what they need, and energy generation aligns with cost efficiency and sustainability."***

> – CAMPAIGN PLATFORM, 2026

Michigan

Michigan Governor-elect Jocelyn Benson's data center plan called for Michigan to enact "clear, strict, enforceable guardrails." On energy, she has said:

> ***"Data centers must help power Michigan's clean energy future with new investment that strengthens the grid, supports affordable energy, and ensures families and small businesses aren't burdened with rising costs."***
>
> – INTERVIEW, MAY 27, 2026

New Mexico

New Mexico Governor-elect Deb Haaland wants to see the New Mexico legislature craft strong guidelines for data center development. On the campaign trail, Haaland said she hopes any proposed guardrails include:

> ***"Requiring that developers build their own renewable energy infrastructure," and, "mandating compliance with the state's clean-energy goals."***
>
> – PRESS CONFERENCE, SEPT. 17, 2026

Ohio

Ohio Governor-elect Amy Acton ran on guardrails for data centers.

> ***Acton's platform said that as governor she would "prioritize low cost, carbon-free and net-zero energy options" for data centers as well as requiring***

> ***them to "prove the project will not increase our electricity prices or negatively impact regional reliability."***
>
> – CAMPAIGN PLATFORM, 2026

Nevada

Nevada Governor-elect Aaron Ford's data center accountability plan includes a clean energy requirement for data centers. He has also said:

> ***"I'll protect Nevadans from higher costs by requiring data centers to provide and pay for their own clean energy usage."***
>
> – OP-ED, OCT. 12, 2026

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Governor-elect David Crowley ran on 100% clean energy requirements for data centers.

> ***"I want to see more renewable energy when it comes down to data centers. I love energy that we don't have to pay for: wind, solar, and battery storage. And I want it to be onsite. What we're pushing right now is for it to be a minimum of 70%. I want it to be 100%."***
>
> – INTERVIEW, OCT. 14, 2026

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Fourteen sitting Democratic governors have called for clean energy guardrails for data centers:

Arizona

In April 2026, Gov. Katie Hobbs' Arizona Energy Promise Task Force released a report with recommendations for addressing growing demand from data centers and other large loads, including a strategic energy plan focused on transitioning to renewable energy.

> ***"I will continue to fight for the clean and affordable energy future Arizonans want and deserve."***
>
> – GOV. KATIE HOBBS, TWITTER, AUG 7, 2025

California

Data centers now have to bring new clean power online, pay their share of grid updates, and cover their own costs instead of passing them to ratepayers. Gov. Newsom signed the package in September.

> ***"California is showing economic growth and decreasing carbon emissions can go hand-in-hand! The 4th largest economy in the world running 9 out of 10 days on 100% clean energy — two-thirds of our energy is clean energy!"***
>
> – GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM, AMERICA IS ALL IN EVENT, SEPT. 22, 2026

Delaware

Data centers have to generate their own clean power now: wind, solar, or nuclear, no exceptions. Gov. Meyer's signed law establishes the requirement for the next decade.

> ***"Delaware is open to innovation [...] but growth must be responsible. It cannot come at the expense of those who live here."***
>
> – GOV. MATT MEYER, BILL SIGNING, AUG. 26, 2026

Illinois

In June 2026, Governor J.B. Pritzker took executive action directing the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to establish a framework for data centers to generate or pay for their own new clean energy resources. The order stated that data centers that don't supply their own clean energy could have their electric service interrupted when the grid is strained so Illinoisans' lights stay on.

> ***"So if we're going to allow them anywhere that they are actually bringing their own clean energy."***
>
> – GOV. J.B. PRITZKER, AMERICA IS ALL IN, SEPT. 22, 2026

Massachusetts

Any data center that isn't built with its own clean power supply pays a fee. Gov. Healey's framework requires local approval before state permitting even starts, and her administration halted new data center tax-incentive applications back in June until stronger guardrails are in place.

> ***"We'd like to have data centers be able to provide their own clean energy on day one."***
>
> – GOV. MAURA HEALEY, PRESS CONFERENCE, SEPT. 8, 2026

Maryland

New data centers now have to submit a clean-power plan and get rated on whether they meet the state's climate commitments, with brownfield and clean-generation projects fast-tracked for permits. Moore's order sets up the review framework.

> ***"We are establishing clear safeguards to ensure Marylanders do not foot the bill, our people benefit, community voices are heard, and our environment is***

> ***protected."***
>
> – GOV. WES MOORE, EXECUTIVE ORDER ANNOUNCEMENT, SEPT. 23, 2026

Michigan

Gov. Whitmer has called on data center companies to commit to new clean energy capacity and cover their own grid costs, not push them onto Michigan families.

> ***"[A]ny company that wants to call Michigan home... powers their facilities with clean energy, ensures Michiganders don't foot the bill for energy, and protects our air, land, and water for future generations."***
>
> – GOV. GRETCHEN WHITMER, STATEMENT ON SENATE DATA CENTER BILLS, JUNE 18, 2026

Minnesota

In June 2025, Governor Tim Walz signed a law making data centers a new class of utility customer that must pay their own full costs and meet the state's renewable energy, solar and carbon-free standards.

> ***"If you want to build those data centers, you need to do it with clean energy."***
>
> – GOV. TIM WALZ, WORLD SUMMIT, JUNE 16, 2026

New Jersey

Data centers have to bring their own clean power and sit in a separate rate class, so their costs can't shift onto residential customers. Gov. Sherrill signed it after announcing the plan in May.

> ***"We've required tech companies to cover the cost of connecting to the grid and***

> ***encourage them to bring more cheap, clean power online."***
>
> – GOV. MIKIE SHERRILL, DATA CENTER BRIEFING, AUG. 27, 2026

New York

Following Gov. Hochul's moratorium, this fall her Department of Public Service is moving to make data centers fund or build their own clean power, on top of a proposal that could mean $1 million per megawatt paid straight to host communities.

> ***"If they want to build in New York, they have to pay their fair share for the power they use... if you're going to come, you have to generate your own power independently, clean energy, not on the grid."***
>
> – GOV. KATHY HOCHUL, 2026 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS, JAN. 13, 2026

North Carolina

Gov. Stein spoke about the need for data centers to pay for their own power and said that power "should be renewable energy." His Energy Policy Task Force is now building the "Bring Your Own Capacity" pathway to make that the rule.

> ***"For a data center to come to North Carolina, they have to bring their own power. They have to pay for their own power. That should be renewable energy, so it's not adding more carbon emissions to the environment."***
>
> – GOV. JOSH STEIN, FOX NEWS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2026

Oregon

Data centers on PGE's grid now pay 29% more while residential rates went down 1.3%. That's the first result of the POWER Act, which Gov. Kotek signed in 2025 to make the largest energy users cover the costs they create. Under these rules, new data centers can't connect to the grid unless there is enough clean energy to meet their demand.

> ***"Oregon households and businesses shouldn't be asked to foot the bill for data center corporations. The POWER Act is working as intended, with data centers on track to pay their fair share of electricity costs."***
>
> – GOV. TINA KOTEK, POWER ACT RESULTS ANNOUNCEMENT, SEPT. 2, 2026

Pennsylvania

Data centers don't get a permit review unless they legally commit to Gov. Shapiro's GRID requirements, including ramping up to 32% clean firm energy sourced in-state by 2035.

> ***"If companies want the Commonwealth's full support – they must meet strong standards on energy affordability, clean energy generation, transparency, workforce development, community impact, and environmental protection."***
>
> – GOV. JOSH SHAPIRO, GRID STANDARDS ANNOUNCEMENT, MAY 27, 2026 (SIGNED AUGUST 18, 2026)

Virginia

Data centers that invest in clean power get priority grid access under Spanberger's new Accountability Framework. The ones that don't will need to wait in line.

> ***"The Framework is a thorough plan to end data center secrecy, protect our environment, lower energy costs for families, bolster our clean energy economy, and make sure Virginia workers have the protections and assurances they deserve."***
>
> – GOV. ABIGAIL SPANBERGER, ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK ANNOUNCEMENT, SEPT. 18, 2026