



DT: July 24, 2025

RE: The Data Center Next Door: Hidden Costs and Harms of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Cryptomining

Participants

- Tyson Slocum, Energy and Climate Program Director, Public Citizen
- Morgan King, Climate and Energy Program Manager, West Virginia Citizen Action
- Julie Bolthouse, Land Use Representative, The Piedmont Environmental Council
- Amanda Garcia, Senior Attorney, Southern Environmental Law Center
- Jackie Sawicky, Founder, Texas Coalition Against Cryptomining

Overview

On Wednesday, July 23, 2025, Sen. **Ed Markey** (D-MA) and Rep. **Steve Cohen** (D-TN-09) led a roundtable discussion on the environmental and economic impacts of AI and cryptomining data centers. They highlighted the Trump administration's [AI Action Plan](#), which lacks environmental protections and could potentially allow hyperscale data centers to bypass federal regulations. Speaker testimonies detailed the significant increase in electricity demand, water consumption, and air pollution from AI data centers, and emphasized the need for federal action to protect public health, prevent environmental degradation, and ensure tech companies pay their fair share of costs.

Key Takeaways

- Cohen spoke out against xAI's Colossus project in Memphis, noting the facility has been found to have operated gas turbines without the correct permits and continues to pollute the environment and surrounding communities.
 - Garcia discussed the legal actions taken to address the violations and the need for stronger air pollution protections. She called for federal action to ensure compliance with environmental laws and protect public health.
 - King called for resources and support for local communities to fight data center proposals and advocate for environmental justice.
- Slocum emphasized the need for stronger state regulations to protect public health and safety from the negative impacts of data centers on local environments and the health of residents.
 - The panelists discussed increases in asthma, cancer, and other diseases near data center sites, especially in low-income and historically marginalized communities.
 - King described the influx of data center proposals in West Virginia and the associated environmental and health risks. She highlighted the reliance on fossil fuels for power and the resulting increase in electricity bills and health issues.

- Markey discussed the increased demand for electricity and the need for more power generation to support AI. He criticized the Trump administration's plan to rely on fossil fuels, highlighting the associated health and environmental risks.
- Cohen and Markey examined how data centers often promise local economic growth but produce very few permanent jobs. Meanwhile, large tax breaks and abatements shift the financial burden to local taxpayers.
 - Slocum highlighted the significant costs of data centers on electricity grids and the need for policies to ensure big tech pays its fair share.. He noted the financial burden placed on working families and small businesses due to data centers' high electricity demands.
- Slocum criticized the Trump administration's plan to use emergency authorities to bypass environmental regulations and protect big tech. She noted potential loopholes in the *Clean Water Act* and *Clean Air Act*.
- Bolthouse described the lack of transparency on the cumulative impacts of data centers and the need for better regulation. She called for better guardrails and greater transparency to ensure the sustainable development of data centers.