

OHIO COMMON GROUND

RESEARCH CENTER • Politicians Must Earn Your Vote

CANDIDATE SNAPSHOT

Ohio Data Centers: What the 2026 Governor's Candidates Have Said

Vivek Ramaswamy (R) vs. Amy Acton (D) — Published July 9, 2026

Candidate Snapshot No. 001 • Research Library ID: RL-2026-003 • Version 1.0

Editorial Independence Notice

This Snapshot was produced by the research and publishing function of Ohio Common Ground (OCG), which operates under a formal editorial firewall from OCG's separate organizing and advocacy activities. It is descriptive, not prescriptive: it does not endorse, oppose, rank, or rate either candidate, and does not represent an organizing, advocacy, or electoral position of Ohio Common Ground or any affiliated entity. Statements attributed to each candidate are drawn from campaign materials, government records, and the independent reporting cited in the Sources section.

Suggested citation

Ohio Common Ground Research Center. "Ohio Data Centers: What the 2026 Governor's Candidates Have Said." Candidate Snapshot No. 001 (RL-2026-007). July 2026.

Publication record

Series: Candidate Snapshot

Publication number: Candidate Snapshot No. 001

Research Library ID: RL-2026-003

Version: 1.0 (see Revision History)

Publication date: July 9, 2026

Prepared by: Ohio Common Ground Research Center

Review: Peer review and editorial review (OCG Research Center)

This Snapshot brings together what each candidate has publicly said about Ohio's data center boom, along with what can be independently verified. It isn't meant to persuade anyone how to vote. It's meant to let voters compare the candidates in their own words.

Ohio's Data Center Landscape

Ohio has roughly 200 data centers today, among the most of any state, with projections for dozens more by 2030.

Gov. Mike DeWine paused new data-center sales-tax exemptions on May 27, 2026, while a legislative committee studies the industry's cost and impact. He described it as a pause, not a ban.

At least 15 to 18 Ohio communities have enacted or considered local moratoriums on new construction, and a citizen-led effort to cap data-center power draw statewide fell short of the signatures needed for the November 2026 ballot.

Data centers are often promoted as economic wins, but they typically create far fewer permanent jobs than their capital investment or tax breaks might suggest — a point raised by the Ohio Consumers' Counsel and echoed in independent reporting.

What Vivek Ramaswamy Has Said

Ramaswamy has consistently described Ohio's data-center growth as a win for the state, calling it a form of reindustrialization and rejecting proposals to restrict it. His campaign platform addresses energy broadly — more natural gas, faster permitting, lower-cost power — without a section specific to data centers.

"It takes two years to build an AI data center or Bitcoin mining firm or whatever — all of which I want in the state, by the way."

Jefferson County Republican Party Lincoln Day Dinner, Wintersville, Ohio, March 2025.

"We're seeing an AI data center boom (which is good), right at the time when we face supply constraints on baseload power generation. I'll unshackle energy production in Ohio, from fossil fuels to nuclear energy, without apology."

Verified X account (@VivekGRamaswamy), March 27, 2025.

"If you're going to use energy, pay for your own energy rather than passing the bill onto the consumer."

Buckeye Career Center campaign stop, New Philadelphia, Ohio, June 5, 2026. Reported by The Repository (Canton).

At that same stop, asked about a data-center ban, Ramaswamy called it “a terrible idea” and compared it to COVID-era shutdown policy, arguing the industry brings high-paying jobs back to Ohio. He has also told Farm and Dairy that utilities may be over-forecasting AI-driven demand, and called for reforms so customers don't pay for projects that never get built.

A progressive advocacy group, Innovation Ohio, released a report in May 2026 arguing that Ramaswamy's personal financial disclosure shows holdings across chip makers, data-center operators, real estate trusts, and cryptocurrency — industries a governor's appointees would help regulate and incentivize. Business and investment ties among candidates for statewide office are common and disclosures are public; Innovation Ohio frames this one as a potential conflict given the scope of a governor's authority over the sector. Ramaswamy's campaign has not publicly responded to the report.

What Amy Acton Has Said

Acton has not called for a statewide ban. Her “ActOn Lowering Costs” platform and public statements focus on shifting added costs onto data-center operators and setting labor and transparency requirements.

At the April 6, 2026 rollout of her affordability plan, Acton said she wants “more guardrails for data centers, including demanding they pay extra utility and environmental costs and requiring union workers construct those facilities.” She also pledged to restore energy-efficiency programs cut under House Bill 6.

"As governor, my number one priority will be lowering costs for working families."

Rollout of the ActOn Lowering Costs agenda, Columbus, Ohio, April 6, 2026.

Her campaign site says she'll appoint PUCO commissioners who “put ratepayers first” and restore funding to the Office of the Consumers' Counsel. Reporting on her plan describes four cost guardrails for data centers: operators, not ratepayers, cover added electricity, gas, water, and environmental costs; no NDA-shielded secrecy from local communities; no relaxed air-quality or groundwater standards; and union labor under community benefits agreements.

Acton's broader affordability agenda has drawn its own criticism: Ohio Public Media reported that her plan offers limited detail on how several of its proposals, including the data-center guardrails, would be funded or enforced.

What Can Be Verified

- Ohio has about 200 data centers today, among the highest counts of any state; a University of Virginia analysis projects roughly 77 more by 2030.
- Gov. DeWine paused new data-center tax exemptions on May 27, 2026, citing the need to study the industry's impact. His office said exemption recipients reported \$27.2 billion in capital investment in 2025.
- A broader legislative package to create a separate electric rate class for data centers, cut their tax abatements, and regulate their water use did not pass before the legislature's early-June 2026 deadline and is not expected to move before November.
- At least 15 to 18 Ohio municipalities have enacted or are considering local moratoriums on new data-center construction.
- A citizen-led constitutional amendment to cap data-center power draw at 25 megawatts fell short of the roughly 413,000 signatures needed for the November 2026 ballot; organizers say they'll try again in 2027.
- Reported cost figures for the tax break vary depending on what's being measured: \$2.5 billion in combined state and local breaks from 2017 to 2024, versus \$1.6 billion for the 2025 sales-tax exemption alone. These are different figures and shouldn't be treated as the same number.

Side-by-Side Comparison

Topic	Ramaswamy (R)	Acton (D)
Overall posture	Wants to expand the buildout; calls it reindustrialization and an economic opportunity for Ohio.	Has not proposed a statewide ban; supports continued growth on the condition that operators, not ratepayers, absorb added costs.
Who pays for added utility and grid costs	Says operators should pay for their own energy use; has also questioned whether utilities are overstating AI-driven demand.	Platform requires data centers to cover added electricity, gas, water, and environmental costs.
Regulation and permitting	Wants faster energy permitting and less regulation; would appoint the boards that oversee siting, incentives, and utility rules.	Wants tighter environmental standards, restored PUCO consumer protections, and an end to NDA-shielded local approvals.
Labor	No stated position found.	Platform calls for union labor and community benefits agreements on data center construction.
Tax incentives	Has not detailed a position on the paused sales-tax exemption; broader platform favors incentives that attract investment.	Has not proposed eliminating the exemption; focus is on requiring operators to cover their own costs rather than restructuring incentives.
Local government authority	Has criticized proposed bans, comparing them to COVID-era shutdown policy; has not detailed a position on local zoning or moratorium power.	Has not detailed a position on local zoning or moratorium authority specifically.
Statewide ban	Opposes.	Has not called for one.

Financial ties to the industry	Subject of a progressive advocacy group's report alleging holdings across the data-center supply chain; campaign has not responded publicly.	No comparable allegations found in sources reviewed.
--------------------------------	--	--

Open Questions

- How would the state verify that a voluntary pledge to “pay their own way” is actually kept, without an enforcement mechanism?
- What specific dollar or usage threshold would count as a data center “covering its added costs” under Acton's guardrails, and who would measure it?
- Neither candidate has publicly explained how their approach would interact with the paused sales-tax exemption — whether existing incentives would be renegotiated, grandfathered, or left alone.
- Neither candidate has addressed water-supply projections showing shortfalls in central Ohio, where most data centers are clustered, as demand grows through 2040.

How OCG Creates Candidate Snapshots

- Primary sources — candidate statements, campaign platforms, government records — are used whenever available.
- Direct quotations are reproduced accurately and attributed to their original source and date.
- Secondary reporting is identified as such.
- Sources tied to an advocacy organization are labeled, regardless of which side of an issue they support.
- Claims that can't be independently verified are left out or clearly identified — never presented as fact.
- OCG does not score, rank, or endorse candidates in Candidate Snapshots.

Revision History

Version 1.0 — July 9, 2026. Initial publication.

Sources

Primary

1. Vivek for Ohio. “The Plan.” vivekforohio.com/the-plan/.
2. ActOn for Governor. “ActOn Lowering Costs: Amy's Affordability Agenda.” actonforgovernor.com/issue/acton-lowering-costs-affordability-agenda/.
3. Office of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine. “Governor DeWine Announces Pause of Data Center Tax Exemption.” May 27, 2026. governor.ohio.gov.

Independent reporting

4. Wang, Robert. “Vivek Ramaswamy says data center ban would hurt Ohio's economy.” *The Repository* (Canton), June 7, 2026.
5. Ingles, Jo. “Ohio governor race: Acton releases lots of affordability ideas, but few specifics on funding them.” *Ohio Public Media Statehouse News Bureau*, April 6–7, 2026.
6. “Where Ohio's front-runners for governor stand on ag, energy and the environment.” *Farm and Dairy*, April 17, 2026.
7. Zuckerman, Jake. “DeWine abruptly pauses a major tax break for data centers in Ohio.” *Signal Ohio*, May 27, 2026.
8. Ballotpedia. “Vivek Ramaswamy” and “Amy Acton” candidate pages.

Advocacy-affiliated

9. Innovation Ohio. "Vivek Ramaswamy's Data Center Portfolio: Divided Loyalties." May 2026.

Ohio Common Ground Research Center operates independently of OCG's organizing and advocacy work. This Snapshot is descriptive and does not adopt or imply a position on either candidate.