



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing:

*“Powering America’s AI Future:
Assessing Policy Options to Increase Data Center Infrastructure”*

February 24, 2026

Thank you, Chairman McCormick and Ranking Member Sykes, for holding this hearing. Thank you to our witnesses for appearing today.

This hearing is a great opportunity for all of us to think carefully about an issue that has moved to the center of our political debate. Data centers loom large in the United States today. They are presented as the foundation of America’s global leadership in artificial intelligence. They are the subject of projected investment on an astonishing level, perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars in the years to come. They are a major source of economic growth and an engine of the stock market. Everything about data centers seems outsized in scale and ambition.

Of course, there is another side to the story. The impacts of data centers on local communities can be just as huge as their national aspirations. Data centers require massive amounts of energy to operate, and their demand for electricity threatens to strain our electric grid and send energy prices surging for residents and small businesses. They consume enormous amounts of water to prevent overheating and emit air pollutants from backup diesel generators that can expose nearby communities to health hazards. They create noise pollution that can distress people living nearby. And their demand for power, if it comes from fossil fuels instead of clean energy, could deal a dangerous setback to America’s clean energy transition.

This debate has a familiar ring to Californians. Our state has considerable experience in trying to balance the transformative economic growth that technological innovation can bring with the impacts of that growth on cost of living and affordability. Certainly for those of us in the Bay Area, this has been a crucial question for many, many years. And California will be central to this debate once again, as the state with the third-largest concentration of data centers in the country.

I have no doubt that different communities will reach different conclusions about what is in their best interest. But there is one thing we should all be able to agree on: more data and more transparency about data center impacts is essential. Communities should not have to make decisions about whether to host a data center without access to basic information about electricity usage, water consumption, air quality, noise pollution, and the potential effect on energy prices. Researchers should be able to use real world data to improve their models and forecasts about data center impacts, instead of relying so heavily on estimates and assumptions. All of us – policymakers, regulators, researchers, local communities, the American people – need consistent, reliable, transparent data to make informed decisions about data center growth. The lack of that transparency is troubling, and I look forward to discussing it further today.

It is worth remembering that ignoring data center impacts does not make them go away. The Trump Administration has become America's biggest cheerleader for the data center buildout. All we ever hear from this administration is that the best thing for America is more data centers, built as quickly as possible, in as many parts of the country as possible. That strikes me as a foolish and shortsighted approach. If our country is not smart about data centers – if we fail to act with diligence and prudence – mistakes will be made that will inevitably cause a backlash, the beginnings of which are already starting to be seen.

Data center operators and their supporters should appreciate that their social license to operate is a valuable and fragile thing. It is in their own self-interest to be as transparent as possible about data center impacts so that the country can make reasoned judgments about how to sustainably mitigate them. I hope to learn more in today's hearing about what the federal government can do to support that kind of transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.