



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Legislative Director, Maine Conservation Voters
In Support of LD 307

*“Resolve, to Establish the Maine Artificial Intelligence Data Center Coordination
Council”*

Before the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee

February 5, 2026

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury and I’m the new Legislative Director at Maine Conservation Voters. MCV is a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I am here to testify in support of LD 307 *“Resolve, to Establish the Maine Artificial Intelligence Data Center Coordination Council”*.

MCV has serious concerns about the environmental impacts of data centers. As more of these facilities are built across the country, we are seeing them have very real-world impacts on the health and environment of their host communities. Data centers currently account for about 4.4% of all electricity that is used in the U.S. Communities with data centers are seeing significant increases in their utility rates. A study by Bloomberg estimates that communities near data centers have seen an increase in their power bills by 267% over the last five years¹. Maine ratepayers are already paying higher bills than other parts of the country and can certainly not afford to see those rates increase any further.

We understand that the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has completed a study on data centers but, while we appreciate and respect the work that was done by DOER, more attention must be paid to the possible environmental impacts of data centers, particularly as it pertains to the water resources necessary to run a data center facility. A

¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2025-ai-data-centers-electricity-prices/>

single mid-sized data center can use upwards of 300,000 gallons of water a day. This is the same amount used by a small town². Maine experienced a severe drought this past year, and we should not be allowing these large companies to come in and utilize our much-needed water resources.

Establishing an AI data center coordination council is a good first step to identifying a complete understanding of the challenges data centers pose and to begin proposing solutions to regulate data centers should Maine decide their development here is appropriate. Regarding the makeup of the council itself, we're pleased to see the inclusion of a representative from the environmental community. That perspective is critical to the success of the council's work. Regarding the council's considerations, we believe certain safeguards are particularly important to evaluate, including whether (1) data centers developers should bring their own clean energy, in line with the state's climate goals, to offset their energy use; (2) they should pay for any necessary grid upgrades to protect ratepayers; (3) they should pay a compensation fee to the state for water usage and report their usage; and (4) the Public Utilities Commission should evaluate if a new rate class is necessary to insulate commercial and residential electric customers from unsustainable rate increases.³

Due to the possible impacts on ratepayers as well as the environment, we would also urge the committee to amend this legislation to put a moratorium on any new data centers until the work of the Coordination Council called for under the legislation is complete. The information gathered will be invaluable to make sure that the health and environment of Mainers is protected and that, if we do allow data centers to be built in Maine, we have safeguards in place to protect our vital natural resources. We urge you to include moratorium language and vote "ought to pass" on LD 307.

² <https://www.npr.org/2022/08/30/1119938708/data-centers-backbone-of-the-digital-economy-face-water-scarcity-and-climate-ris>

³ <https://elpc.org/projects/powering-data-centers-with-clean-energy/> ; <https://www.eenews.net/articles/states-push-to-end-secrecy-over-data-center-water-use/> ; <https://stateline.org/2026/02/05/with-electricity-bills-rising-some-states-consider-new-data-center-laws/> ; <https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Harvard-ELI-Extracting-Profits-from-the-Public.pdf>