

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

FOR RELEASE Immediately
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Utah Raised the Bar on Data Centers. Wyoming Did Not. The Legislature Must Act.

Wyoming is being told that data centers can be built “the Wyoming way.” That sounds good; however, Wyoming citizens deserve more than a slogan. They are entitled to be included in public policy and a public process defining what “the Wyoming way” is rather than Governor Gordon unilaterally deciding for them.

Utah Governor Spencer Cox understood the seriousness of this issue. He issued an executive order with clear and direct language requiring protection of water, air quality, utility rates, wildlife, communities, and quality of life. It also required that artificial intelligence and its infrastructure should remain human-guided and human-enhancing.

In Wyoming, Governor Gordon’s executive order missed the mark. Through weak and subjective language, it merely encourages development and asks agencies to encourage communication and water-saving technology. We all know encouragement does not disclose a permit, protect a neighbor’s well, prevent ratepayer cost shifting or stop NDAs from concealing public-resource commitments. Most importantly, the order lines up state agencies in a pro-development posture before safeguards are in place.

The real issue for Wyoming is what enforceable statewide standards should exist for every data center, artificial-intelligence campus and the local infrastructure commitment now being contemplated and whether continued tax breaks are warranted. At what point does a project that consumes large amounts of water, power, land, and public infrastructure, while providing relatively few permanent jobs, cease to be economic development and become extraction?

There are serious questions to be asked about projects such as Project Jade, including where the water will come from, what wells will be utilized, what aquifer will be tapped, what the annual and peak withdrawals will be, and what protections and due process remedies will exist for neighboring landowners, agriculture, and local communities.

The reason these policy decisions cannot be treated as only a local issue or land use policy is simple: aquifers do not stop at county lines, and neither does the electric grid. Decisions made in one community can affect all of Wyoming. These are statewide concerns that require statewide attention.

That is why I originally requested that legislators be polled on whether Wyoming should convene a special session on data centers and artificial-intelligence infrastructure. I have decided not to conduct the poll on a special session at this time, even though there is merit in pursuing a very limited special session to enact a moratorium on data center development until the legislature acts. However, the election cycle, limited interest in convening immediately, and complexity of the issue make it unlikely that a special session would produce long-term solutions.

Instead, I have spoken with legislative leadership, and they have agreed to allow me to run a deep dive into data centers, water use, and related issues through the Agriculture Committee.

While water remains my number one concern because we are facing severe drought conditions with irrigation wells in Goshen County struggling to pump water and, in some instances, running dry, the issues are much broader and interconnected. A thorough review must be public and fact-based. It should include the State Engineer's Office, DEQ, counties, municipalities, conservation districts, utilities, economic-development entities, landowners, ratepayers, health experts, agriculture, industry, and Wyoming citizens. The committee cannot resolve every issue before the next session, but it can begin gathering facts, identifying gaps, and framing the questions that must be answered.

There is support for economic development when done right and for a public purpose. There is support for Wyoming jobs, innovation, private investment, national security, and responsible technology. Strong public policies surrounding these issues are not anti-business, and they are not fear. They give good businesses regulatory certainty and protect citizens from bad decisions by providing guideposts and accountability.

Wyoming's people must come first. Life sustaining water must come first. Development should serve Wyoming—not the other way around.

Utah's executive order raised the bar. Wyoming's did not.

We cannot afford to be careless. We must proceed with discretion, discernment, and clear direction in order to preserve opportunity, stability, and liberty for future generations in Wyoming.

That is why the Legislature must act.

About Senator Cheri Steinmetz:

Senator Steinmetz represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties.

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