

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

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Data Centers: A Sales Pitch Wrapped in a Flag, and a Ranch Gone for Good

Governor Gordon recently penned a column invoking his great uncle, General George S. Patton, and the line, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way."

Patton earned the authority to say that the hard way — with a plan, discipline, logistics, and the nerve to act in plain sight. Governor Mark Gordon has done the opposite: fast-tracking data centers with no clear statewide plan and limited transparency.

Wyoming citizens are smart, independent, resourceful, and hardworking. They are not sheep. Their elected officials work for them, not the other way around — something too many politicians seem to forget.

So let's reject the false choice between bold action and hand-wringing. Asking hard questions is not fearmongering. It is accountability. Wyoming is only asking what any good commander would ask: What is the plan? How will it be measured? Who pays if it fails? Is this truly what Wyoming citizens want for their state?

Once it's a data center, it's never a ranch again.

Whatever else these projects may be, they are permanent. A ranch converted to a data-center campus does not go back to being a ranch.

The proposed Wheatland project, Site Layer 4, has reportedly applied to rezone 5,344 acres of ranchland near Wheatland — now used for grazing and agriculture — for a proposed \$26 billion data center campus and power-generation complex. The real footprint reaches much farther when these projects bring demands for sprawling wind and solar projects tied to corporate net-zero and low-carbon commitments. When a developer says rezoning large swaths of cattle country will "counter China," Wyoming citizens have every right to call it what it is: a sales pitch wrapped in a flag. Our farm ground, our grazing land, our water resources, and our horizon are gone for good.

America is already winning the AI race.

The governor warns that if Wyoming hesitates, we hand the future to China. America already leads the world in high-end computing power. You do not "counter China" by surrendering Wyoming to technology billionaires.

Nobody asked us.

Too many of these decisions are being made before the public has a meaningful voice. Meetings are held behind closed doors. Nondisclosure agreements keep citizens from knowing who promised what, to

whom, and at what cost. Projects placed in business parks or annexed into city limits can bypass public scrutiny and due process.

The governor erroneously calls this a local decision. A data center draws on water, electricity, roads, wildlife corridors, housing, emergency services, and ratepayers across a region. One city council or county commission should not settle questions that reshape water and power for the entire state. That is why Wyoming has an Industrial Siting Council and a Department of Environmental Quality — to weigh impacts no single town or county can measure alone and to ensure responsibility and accountability for large industrial projects.

Wyoming families are already paying.

Rocky Mountain Power has raised rates several times in recent years and continues to seek more. We are told data centers are not the reason. Utility leaders have acknowledged that ratepayers could be left with power-plant costs if large-load customers leave before those costs are recovered. The large-load tariff we are told will protect us has not yet been proven, and it does not cover every Wyoming utility or rural cooperative.

Cox built guardrails. Gordon greased the road.

Utah Governor Spencer Cox faced the same pressure and chose a stronger path. His executive order requires agencies to protect water, air quality, utility customers, wildlife, communities, and quality of life. Governor Gordon's executive order speaks in weaker terms: minimize, encourage, coordinate. One approach builds guardrails. The other clears the road.

The power is yours.

What Wyoming decides now will shape this state for generations. Citizens are powerful and these decisions belong to them, the people, not to a handful of officials, developers, agencies, or economic-development boards. Those we elect are elected to serve, not to rule.

Article 1, Section 1 of the Wyoming Constitution says it plainly:

"All power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness; for the advancement of these ends they have at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform or abolish the government in such manner as they may think proper."

The Constitution is yours. Read it. Use it. Defend it — so the next generation does not lose the Wyoming we were entrusted to protect.

About Senator Cheri Steinmetz:

Senator Steinmetz represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties.

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