



October 25, 2026

To: Pend Oreille County Commissioners - Chair Smiley, Vice Chair Rosencrantz, and Gentle
From: Responsible Growth * NE Washington
RE: Data Center Ban/Moratorium and Community Benefits Agreement

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Pend Oreille County Board of Commissioners. I'm speaking on behalf of Responsible Growth * NE Washington, whose mission it has been for the past 10 years "to work within the community to foster responsible economic growth, support living wage jobs, promote arts & humanities, and protect and sustain the connections with our rural lifestyle and natural environment."

Members of the Board of Commissioners, I am addressing you once again to formally request that the county enact either a permanent ban or, at minimum, an eight month to a one-year moratorium on the approval of new data centers and the expansion of existing facilities.

Because data centers, especially artificial intelligence models need a huge amount of computing power, data centers are growing much larger. Many large "hyperscale" facilities now cover the space of hundreds of football fields. They require massive amounts of electricity and water, which raises worries about climate change, air pollution, water shortages, loud noise, and disruptions to local wildlife and nearby neighborhoods.

Two thoughts : a permanent ban would end the conversation on any new construction or expansion of existing data centers. A moratorium would do the following:

#1. provide ample time to update the POC Comprehensive Plan and the Development Regulations and establish the policies and regulations to govern, monitor, and enforce data centers regulations;

#2. provide the time needed to establish the frameworks and execute a CBA (Community Benefit Agreement) that would address the following categories:

Direct Payments and Community Funds: Technology firms frequently commit to direct financial contributions or ongoing community investment funds to support infrastructure modernization, public services, and educational programs. We would highly suggest contributions to affordable housing projects.

Tax Revenue Commitments and Transparency: Ensure the community doesn't lose out when the companies are not financially measuring up or having a turn down.

- **Environmental Sustainability and Resource Caps:** Given the massive ecological footprint of AI data centers, CBAs establish rigorous caps and standards on natural resource usage. This includes strict limitations on daily water consumption, mandates for closed-loop cooling systems to recycle water, and legally binding requirements to rely entirely on renewable energy sources (such as wind or solar power).

- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Technology companies commit to funding or directly supporting necessary upgrades to local infrastructure, including power grids, water treatment plants, local utilities, and road networks, ensuring that the surrounding community is not overwhelmed by the facility's demands.

- **Noise, Light, and Pollution Mitigation:** Because hyperscale data centers generate considerable ambient noise and light pollution from cooling fans and servers, CBAs set strict noise decibel limits, lighting restrictions, and continuous environmental monitoring requirements.

- **Job Creation:** CBAs outline specific quotas for construction and permanent operational jobs, prevailing wage requirements, low-income hiring targets, and local labor provisions, insurance, and job security.

- **Public Transparency and Reporting:** To combat opaque behind-the-door dealmaking and the misuse of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), modern CBAs mandate full public transparency, annual sustainability reporting, and public dashboards to track key performance metrics over the life of the project.

Ultimately, if our Pend Oreille County Commissioners choose not to enact a moratorium, pursue a permanent ban, or address data center developments in open, transparent public forums, the community deserves a clear and fully accountable explanation as to why.

RG * NEW believes, it is past time to ensure that Pend Oreille County residents are given a meaningful voice and a genuine seat at the table in shaping local, heavy, industrial policy, rather than being sidelined by the rapid, unchecked advance of the data center and AI infrastructure fast, track train.”

Phyllis J Kardos, RG * NEW Chair
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