

MAHA activists warn against coal-powered AI centers

BY ALI SWENSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Nearly 200 activists in Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s “Make America Healthy Again” movement are criticizing President Donald Trump's promotion of coal to fuel the rise of artificial intelligence data centers, according to a letter sent Friday.

The letter, signed by at least two former staffers from Kennedy's 2024 presidential campaign, marks the first major MAHA movement mobilization over fossil fuels and the latest in a series of rifts between the diverse group of activists and the Trump administration over environmental policy.

The letter to Trump, Kennedy and various other Cabinet officials, first obtained by The Associated Press, laments a 2025 executive order that aimed to boost coal to power data centers over pollution concerns and asks the administration to consider renewable options, including solar and geothermal energy.

“We understand the importance of American leadership in artificial intelligence, national security, innovation, and economic growth,” the letter reads. “But American AI leadership should not come at the cost of a more toxic burden for American children.”

In response, White House spokesperson Taylor Rogers



Ted Shaffrey/AP Photo

Cars drive past data centers on July 16, 2023, in Ashburn, Va.

noted that greenhouse gas emissions dropped to a 30-year low during Trump's first term and said Trump “was given a mandate to roll back the radical climate policies that are burning a hole through taxpayers' wallets.”

The agencies receiving the letter didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Prominent MAHA figures behind the letter include Zen Honeycutt, a former Kennedy campaign staffer and founder of the advocacy group Moms Across America, and Charles

Eisenstein, a former speechwriter on Kennedy's campaign. Honeycutt said she asked the Kennedy-aligned political action committee MAHA Action to sign onto the letter but did not receive a reply.

Although it may not reflect the views of all MAHA activists, the new line of criticism against one of the administration's signature policies less than three months before November's midterm elections could present another challenge for Republicans as they seek to win over the voting bloc in key

states.

As health secretary, Kennedy has carried out several policy changes that cater to the MAHA movement, including attempting to scale back childhood vaccine recommendations, a central priority for some activists. He also has sought to remove artificial dyes from food and encouraged Americans to have healthy diets free of ultraprocessed foods.

But many in the MAHA movement, which Trump credits with helping him win back the White House two

years ago, say they have grown frustrated with the administration over its embrace of pesticides such as glyphosate and its deregulatory environmental agenda. Some have said they plan to vote on issues over party this fall, raising the political stakes of their increasingly public tensions with the Republican administration.

As president, Trump has enthusiastically embraced what he calls “big, beautiful coal” despite outcry from environmentalists about planet-warming greenhouse gases and toxic chemicals released by coal-fired power plants.

His administration has moved to reverse tighter Biden-era standards on greenhouse gas emissions, which, in addition to their climate impacts, can harm brain development in children and increase rates of heart attacks in adults.

He also has been a vocal advocate for data centers, which power artificial intelligence and cloud computing, framing them as a necessary component of winning the AI race against China.

“If I were the mayor of a town or the governor of a state, and I had a chance to get a big plant in, an AI plant or a data center,” Trump said this week, “I would absolutely want it because the jobs are enormous and the money paid, the taxes paid, are just enormous.”

TAX

FROM PAGE A1

property tax rate of 20.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value, up from 20.2 cents in 2025. The compensating rate is designed to generate about the same amount of revenue as the previous year despite changes in property assessments. Clayton told council members real property assessments declined by nearly \$38 million from last year, while new growth assessments also

were negative by more than \$20 million.

“Because we have negative growth this year, my recommendation is to take the compensating tax rate on real property of 20.5 cents per \$100 of assessment,” Clayton said.

She also recommended leaving the city's personal property tax rate unchanged at 23.9 cents per \$100 and the motor vehicle tax rate at 25.1 cents per \$100.

The council is expected to formally consider the tax ordinance later this month.

The meeting also featured an extended presentation from Hopkinsville Electric System General Manager Jeff Hurd on a proposed artificial intelligence data center.

Hurd said an existing bitcoin mining operation wants to convert its current 15-megawatt facility into an AI computing center while developing a separate 50-megawatt site. He said the projects would pay for all required electric infrastructure improvements and could provide additional revenue that helps

the municipal utility avoid future electric rate increases.

“I'm really not here to promote data centers,” Hurd told council members. “I'm really here to speak for the residents and businesses of Hopkinsville who depend on HES for their electric needs.”

Council members questioned Hurd about potential noise, environmental impacts and zoning restrictions. Community Development Services director Tom Britton said the Planning Commission continues to

develop an ordinance establishing standards for future data centers.

“CDS is committed to striking the appropriate balance to provide the opportunity, as well as protecting residents,” Britton said, and added the commission expects to forward a recommendation to the council after another public hearing.

In other business: The council received updates on the city's intergovernmental support agreement with Fort Campbell, heard reports on accreditation efforts involving the fire

department, code enforcement, emergency communications and public works, and continued discussion on proposed landfill and transfer station fee increases.

Council member Clayton Summers proposed phasing in the rate increases over three years, while Solid Waste Enterprise Board Chairman Wendell Lynch said the board's original proposal is needed to fund future landfill expansion and other capital projects.

TRUMP

FROM PAGE A1

Beef prices have climbed to record highs amid a drop in the number of U.S. cattle, consistent consumer demand and limits on cattle from Mexico, where the animals are facing a flesh-eating pest. The U.S. president has also imposed 50% tariffs on Brazil, a major beef exporter.

Trump remains under pressure to cut costs and address affordability issues ahead of November's midterms. But ranchers, normally some of the president's biggest supporters, are enjoying some rare profitable years and worry cheap beef imports will reduce cattle prices — and with it, the incentive to increase herd sizes.

“We all want lower grocery prices, but as I've said for months, we cannot do it at the expense of American producers,” Sen. Deb Fischer, R-



Jack Dura/AP Photo

Beef cows gather at the Diamond J Angus Ranch on March 31, near Mandan, N.D.

Neb., said in a statement. “Flooding the market with foreign beef hurts our livestock industry and undermines the long-term solution: growing the U.S. cattle herd to meet demand.”

When asked by reporters Friday evening about criticism of the deal, Trump said, “I love the ranchers; they've done a fantastic job. But they admit that we need a little help, and, in order to get the prices down, so that's what we're doing.”

Sen. Tim Sheehy, R-Mont., said in a social

media post just hours after Trump announced the deal that the president's “heart is in the right place,” but importing beef will “harm our ranching families who feed the nation.”

And Sen. Pete Ricketts, R-Neb., said that while he appreciates the administration's focus on grocery prices, “short term policy shifts do not equal long term solutions.”

The deal, Trump said, allows up to 300,000 metric tons of ground beef to be imported into the U.S. for the next 90

days without activating an “out of quota” tariff, which is a tax that goes into effect once a certain quantity of that product enters the country.

The president said on social media that he had committed to ensuring the imported beef would be sold at 25% below current market rates, making it cheaper for American consumers. Trump didn't specify which countries would import the beef while speaking to reporters Friday, but said “there are a few” and that they'll send the “highest quality beef.” A White House official said the deal is with foreign beef exporters who have agreed to the discount on beef.

“You don't put America first by putting U.S. cattle producers last,” U.S. Cattlemen's Association President Justin Tupper said in a statement. “This move will weaken our markets and gamble with food safety in the process.”

The president's announcement and other

market interventions sacrifice “long-term stability for short term messaging,” Colin Woodall, CEO of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said in a statement.

Glynn Tonsor, a professor at Kansas State University who focuses on the cattle and beef industry, said he would like to see more details about the latest deal but that his immediate assessment was that it wouldn't have a big effect on prices.

That's because 300,000 metric tons amounts to roughly 3% of what Americans eat yearly, he said. “The relative magnitude we are talking about is pretty small.”

David Anderson, professor of agricultural economics at Texas A&M University, said he was skeptical other countries could redirect so much beef to the U.S. in such a short time period.

“Is that even achievable?” he questioned in a phone interview.

The White House offi-

cial, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a plan that has yet to be finalized, said the beef in question is lean beef trimmings that are used for ground beef production. Trump plans to sign an executive order formalizing the directive within two weeks, the official said. The administration made a push last year to buy more beef from Argentina to try to bring down prices.

The president said Friday that his plan would help grow the U.S. cattle supply, which is the smallest it's been in decades. Some ranchers and experts said the opposite effect was more likely.

“Imports have been a major contributor to the decline in the U.S. cattle inventory,” said Bill Bullard, the CEO of the R-CALF USA, which represents independent cattle producers. “Using more imports today will exacerbate that decline and will prevent herd expansion.”

TOWN

FROM PAGE A2

• The **Hopkinsville Brewing Company Running Club** meets every Wednesday at the brewery from 5-8 p.m. It is open to all ages and abilities from walkers to sprinters, and strollers and leashed dogs are welcome.

• The **Museums of Historic Hopkinsville-Christian County Board of Directors** meets monthly on the second Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. at the Pennyroyal Area Museum. The meetings are open to the public.

• The **Kiwanis Club of Hopkinsville** meets at noon every Thursday at the War Memorial Building, 1202 S. Virginia St.

• The **City of Elkton**

meets at 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month at Elkton City Hall, 71 Public Square, Elkton.

• The **Hopkinsville Committee of the Whole** meets at 6 p.m. on the Thursday following the last Hopkinsville City Council meeting in the Hopkinsville Municipal Center, 715 South Virginia Street.

• Museums of Historic Hopkinsville-Christian County holds a free **History**

on Tap event at 6:30 p.m. on the last Thursday of the month at the Hopkinsville Brewing Company. The events aim to share local history in a relaxed and fun setting. There is a new topic each week on someone or someplace in Hopkinsville or Christian County. For more information, follow the museum on Facebook or call 270- 887-4270.

• The Hopkinsville-Christian County Public Library,

1101 Bethel St., offers a **Play and Grow** class for toddlers to preschool age children at 10 a.m. every Friday. For more information, call 270- 887-4262.

• The **Todd County Fiscal Court** meets at 9 a.m. on the second and fourth Friday of each month at the courthouse, 202 E. Washington St., Elkton.

• Hopkinsville Parks and Recreation has partnered with Balance Hoptown to

offer **Yoga in the Park** at 10 a.m. the first Saturday of every month. The park changes each month, follow them on Facebook to learn more.

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