

# EPA proposal could leave public in dark on data center plans

BY MATTHEW DALY  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — A plan by the Environmental Protection Agency could make it harder for the public to learn about and comment on proposed AI data centers that have sparked backlash in communities across the United States and transformed the midterm election landscape.

The EPA proposal would eliminate a federal requirement that states notify the public and seek comment before issuing air pollution permits for data centers and other industrial facilities. States could still offer opportunities for public comment, but the EPA would no longer mandate them as a condition for states to grant permits.

Critics say the move could thwart local residents from learning about proposed data centers or making their voices heard before projects are approved and construction begins. The move comes during a widespread backlash as tech giants build hundreds of massive server warehouses to fuel artificial intelligence and cloud computing.

“By eliminating the long-standing federal requirement for public notice, this proposal continues efforts by the Trump administration to turn its back on the fundamental EPA principle of transparency,” said Mike Koerber, a former deputy director of EPA’s air quality office.

If made final, the plan could create “an unlevel playing field where citizens



SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN/Associated Press

**Protesters hold signs in opposition of the Project Jupiter data center during a demonstration last month in Santa Fe, N.M.**

in one state are kept completely in the dark about new data centers and heavy industrial emissions in their backyards, while neighboring states maintain oversight,” he said.

Under the EPA plan, states with weak or no requirements for public comment could speed permits for data centers, power plants and other pollution sources without consulting the public or even informing communities where the facilities are located, Koerber and other critics said.

### COMMUNITIES DESERVE A CHANCE TO WEIGH IN, ADVOCATES SAY

“Data centers and other industrial sources should not be able to get their air pollution permits in secret,” said Keri Powell, senior attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center, an advocacy organization that leads a coalition of nearly 200 environmental, health and community

groups that filed comments with the EPA opposing the plan. “Communities deserve a chance to weigh in” before potentially harmful projects are approved.

An EPA spokesperson called that a false narrative. “In our proposal we are saying that states get to pick how they want their permitting process to go for minor sources” of air pollution, spokesperson Carolyn Holran said.

The EPA proposal does not specifically identify data centers, she said, noting that the plan also would apply to laundromats, car repair shops and even landfills and steel mills that are considered “minor” pollution sources under the federal Clean Air Act.

The proposal does not demand that states make particular changes to their programs, nor does it alter federal emission standards or weaken environmental protections, Holran said.

“Rather, the proposal simply aligns the national program with the Clean Air Act language to ensure that states are in the lead regarding their programs.”

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, who has made U.S. leadership in AI a top agency priority, said in a statement that the plan is aimed at “cutting unnecessary and burdensome red tape, unleashing American energy and advancing cooperative federalism” with states. The EPA is expected to make the rule final next year.

President Donald Trump continues to stick up for data centers, even as politicians from both parties criticize them and many communities try to block them. Trump said on social media this week that U.S. communities that don’t have data centers will “end up being backwards and poor.”

### TRUMP SAYS DATA CENTERS ARE CRUCIAL IN THE AI RACE AGAINST CHINA

Trump has acknowledged that data centers need “a little public relations help” and has pushed tech companies to generate their own electricity to shield consumers from higher utility bills. The Republican president calls data centers critical to winning the AI race against China.

Environmental groups and other critics say the EPA proposal ignores the reality that many states, particularly in the South and Midwest, don’t require public notice or hearings beyond those set by federal agencies. The federal plan

would leave many communities in the dark before data centers show up in their backyards, they said.

“It’s beyond cruel for Trump’s EPA to silence front-line communities who bear the brunt of unhealthy air,” said Brandon Jones-Cobb, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity, another environmental group.

The EPA “has already turned its back on science, cut enforcement against industrial polluters and eliminated life-saving air pollution measures,” he said. “Now it wants to shut the public out of decisions to build or expand facilities that expose communities to dangerous air pollution, including data centers.”

Powell, whose organization focuses on six Southern states from Virginia to Alabama, said many states “only do what is required by federal law” when it comes to public notice of land-use projects and other environmental concerns.

“We rely on a minimum federal requirement to ensure we have environmental protections and a voice,” she said in an interview, calling regulation of data centers a crucial issue in a region where the energy-hungry behemoths are proliferating. Virginia and Georgia are both among states with the highest concentration of current and proposed data centers.

### AMERICANS WORRY DATA CENTERS COULD CAUSE POLLUTION, JOB LOSSES

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults say they are “extremely” or

“very” concerned about the environmental impacts of AI, according to a poll last year from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago. Americans are more likely to think that over the next decade, artificial intelligence will do more to hurt than help the environment, the economy and society as a whole, the poll found.

Besides powering AI and cloud computing, data centers are often sources of nitrogen oxide, which helps form ozone, as well as carbon monoxide and other air pollutants. Local communities also have expressed concerns about excessive water use and noise from data centers.

Many Americans worry that AI could increase economic disparities and cause widespread job losses.

Data center advocates stress that local taxes paid by the centers can help fund public schools, reducing the financial burden on homeowners.

Jane Williams, executive director of California Communities Against Toxics, said even if data centers ultimately are approved, “every community should be able to participate robustly in governmental decisions that can pollute our air.”

Rolling back the EPA rule “pulls a dark cloud, filled with soot and toxic chemicals, over communities’ right to know what polluting facilities are planned in their community,” she said.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

#### FRIDAY

Hardin County AM Rotary Club meeting, 7 a.m., The Café at Memorial Methodist Church, 631 N. Miles St., E'town. POC: Scott Kisselbaugh, 270-766-8614.

Senior Citizens Nutrition Group, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Colvin Community Center, 230 Freedoms Way, Radcliff. Pinochle, Bingo, Rook, Hand and Foot or Scrabble. Lunch between 11-11:30 a.m. Transportation through CATS, 800-242-8225. POC: 270-351-4079.

The Woman’s Club of Elizabethtown meeting, social time, 9:15 a.m., meeting, 10 a.m., Brown-Pusey House, 128 N. Main St., E'town. POC: Diane McCamish, 270-304-7701.

Books and Brew, 10:30-11:10 a.m., Zoom. Looking for reading ideas? Talk about what you’ve been reading, connect and share a love of reading. Register in advance at forms.gle/3XiRYGT8bhMichqc8 . POC: 270-769-6337.

Games for Grownups, 1-3 p.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. Games available or bring a game to share. Bring food and eat while playing. POC: 270-769-6337.

Ancestral Trails Historical Society meeting, 7 p.m., Room 112, James S. Owen Building, Elizabethtown Community and Technical College, 600 College Street Road, E'town. Presenter is Faith Shacklett, program is “Patriots, Pioneers and Lawmen.” POC: Marcia Barnes, 270-234-4541 or mgbarnes@hotmail.com.

#### SATURDAY

Howeavally High School Class of 1960 and spouses, 8:30 a.m., Shoney’s, 1046 Executive Drive, E'town. POC: Bob Woosley, 270-877-2244.

Celtic Music Jam Session, 10-11:30 a.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. Bring an acoustic instrument to learn, share and enjoy traditional Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English tunes and songs by ear. For musicians ages 18 and older, intermediate level or above. POC: Lorinda Jones, lorindajones.com.

Elizabethtown Chess Club U.S. Chess Federation Tournaments, 11 a.m., Family Buffet, 121 Towne Drive, E'town. POC: Johnny Owens, 270-272-3061.

Elizabethtown Art Coalition, noon-2 p.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. For artists to convene, share character design work and discuss art. POC: 270-769-6337.

You Fly Reading Program, 12:45-3:30 p.m. Room 209 Regional Postsecondary Center, Elizabethtown Community and Technical

College, 600 College Street Road, E'town. Comprehensive phonics reading program for second-12th grade. POC: Marcus Dixon, 502-435-1638, Joyce Beasley, 270-401-2737, or the Rev. Brenda Skillman, 270-766-8653.

Open Door Community Kitchen free meal, 4:30-6 p.m., Vine Grove United Methodist Church, 306 High St., Vine Grove. POC: Dan Paddack, 270-945-4997 or 270-877-5231.

#### MONDAY

Celebrate Recovery, 6 p.m., St. Stephen Baptist Church, 757 S. Woodland Drive, Radcliff. Connection time starts at 5:15 p.m. Find help, hope and healing for your hurts, hang-ups and habits. POC: Richard Lockette, 270-401-7400.

Dad Café, 6-8 p.m., Goodwill’s Elizabethtown Opportunity Center, 243 W. Dixie Ave., E'town. Focus on co-parenting. POC: 270-506-4950.

#### TUESDAY

Senior Citizens Nutrition Group, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Colvin Community Center, 230 Freedoms Way, Radcliff. Pinochle, Bingo, Rook, Hand and Foot or Scrabble. Lunch between 11-11:30 a.m.

Transportation through CATS, 800-242-8225. POC: 270-351-4079.

Ancestral Trails Historical Society research library, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 201 W. Dixie Ave., E'town. POC: 270-982-0881.

Brown-Pusey House is open for tours and genealogy research, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 128 N. Main St., E'town. POC: 270-765-2515.

RESEA orientation classes, 10 a.m., Kentucky Career Center-Lincoln Trail, 233 Ring Road, Suite 100, E'town. Developing an individualized employment plan, personalized career and labor market insights, resume writing, interview prep, identifying options to achieve higher income and sustainable employment and aiding prompt re-entry into the labor force. POC: Itcareercenter.org.

Elizabethtown-Hardin-LaRue Retired Teachers Association meeting, 11:30 a.m., EC3 campus, 200 University Drive, E'town. Program is Laurel Tabaka, director of the Hardin County Public Library. POC: 270-769-8001.

Hardin Fiscal Court meeting, 3:30 p.m., Hardin County Government Building, 150 N. Provident Way, E'town. POC: 270-765-2350.

Business Partnership Agreements, 4-5 p.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. Join business law attorney Jamie Lobb to learn about what

defines a partnership, what unexpected problems can arise and how good business documents can prevent a business loss. Registration required at

forms.gle/TPs6wmbgdj1kd1Vw5. POC: 270-769-6337.

Knights of Columbus bingo, 312 E. Main St., Vine Grove. Doors open at 5 p.m. Bingo at 7 p.m. Full-service kitchen. POC: John Pike, 270-307-1499.

Stroke and Brain Injury Support Group, 5 p.m., Swope Toyota Community Room, 1085 N. Dixie Ave., E'town. Sponsored by Baptist Health Hardin and Encompass Hospital of Lakeview. POC: 270-766-3081.

Elizabethtown Chess Club meeting, 6 p.m., Family Buffet, 121 Towne Drive, E'town. POC: Johnny Owens, 270-272-3061.

#### WEDNESDAY

Tai Chi, 1 p.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. One-hour class. Gentle warm up including the eight brocades, an 800-year-old series on movements designed for maximum benefit to improve balance and flexibility. Can be done seated for those with problems standing. POC: 270-769-6337.

Create, 3-4:30 p.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. Cardstock on Canvas Nature Scene. Registration required at forms.gle/QSpCenUrT8zxBaw76. POC: 270-769-6337.

Public Works Committee meeting, 3:30 p.m., third-floor meeting room, Hardin County Government Building, 150 N. Provident Way, E'town. POC: 270-765-2350.

#### THURSDAY

First Aid Training, 10-11:30 a.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. Non-certifying course, no cards will be issued. First aid course will include a component to help attendees understand the 911 system.

Registration required at forms.gle/xKsgp2cwUvdC5GxT8. POC: 270-769-6337.

Radcliff Rotary Club meeting, noon, Colvin Community Center, 230 Freedoms Way, Radcliff. POC: Mark Casey, 270-312-6429.

Emergency Services Committee meeting, 3:30 p.m., Hardin County Government Building, 150 N. Provident Way, E'town. POC: 270-765-2350.

Career Advising 4-5 p.m., Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, E'town. POC: Nancy Shores, 502-492-8454 or nancyjo56@gmail.com.

Tavern in the Garden, 6-9 p.m., Brown-Pusey House Cunningham Garden, 128 N. Main St., E'town. Music provided by Runaway Souls and food by Juanitos. Free admission, Cash bar. POC: Brown-Pusey House, 270-765-2515.

Sonora City Commission meeting, 6:30 p.m., second floor, Sonora Volunteer Fire Department, 330 E. Western Ave., Sonora. Meetings open to the public. POC: Earl “Tee” Hodges, 270-369-7016.

The Charles W. Logsdon Historic Downtown Walking Tour, 7 p.m., meet at Dixie Avenue and Main Street, Public Square, E'town. Free, weather permitting. Wear comfortable shoes. POC: facebook.com/EtownCityEvents.

#### ONGOING

Adult, child and infant CPR certification with basic first aid, sponsored by American Heart Association certified instructors. \$75 registration required before all classes. POC: 270-763-2915.

Al-Anon, in-person and

Zoom. Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength and hope in order to solve their common problems. POC: kyal-anon.org.

American Legion Post No. 113 service officer, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesdays walk in, other days by appointment, 1251 Ring Road, E'town. POC: Bob Craig 270-370-2589 or robertcraig422@outlook.com.

American Red Cross is recruiting blood drive volunteer. Manage the registration process and oversee the hospitality area at blood drives in Hardin, LaRue and Hart counties. If you are available to work a five- to six-hour shift at least once a month, call or email. POC: kyvolunteerservices@redcross.org or Stacy at 502-612-9202.

Central Kentucky Community Action’s Retired and Senior Volunteer Program seeks volunteers. Must be 55 or older. POC: Melissa Bland, 270-737-1059 or RSVP.Director@ckcac.org.

DAV Radcliff Chapter 156 service officer, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays by appointment only, Radcliff City Hall basement, 411 W. Lincoln Trail Blvd., Radcliff. POC to schedule: 502-345-9912 or 270-390-4121 or 270-351-3666.

DAV Chapter 003 Service Officer hours, 8 a.m. the first three Tuesdays of the month, Kentucky Career Center, 233 Ring Road, E'town. No appointment necessary. Additionally, Chapter Service Officers will be at the Community Based Outpatient VA Clinic on For Knox. POC: Bob Casher, 757-377-0214.

Disabled American Veterans Chapter No. 3 Transportation change of phone number. Transportation is available within Hardin County as well as Robley Rex VA and Grayson County CBOC. Must be scheduled 48 hours in advance. POC: 270-505-9747 or

email dispatch@davchapter3transpo.org.

Foster parents classes, offered by Necco, are available free online. POC: scutchin@necco.org.

GED preparation classes, 9 a.m.-noon Monday-Thursday and 5-8 p.m. Tuesday/Thursday in E'town; 9 a.m.-noon Monday/Wednesday and 5-8 p.m. Monday in Radcliff; ESL classes, 12:30-2:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday in E'town; and GED/ESL classes, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Monday/Wednesday at Fort Knox. POC: 270-769-8866.

Hosparus Health Thrift Shoppe, Helmwood Plaza Shopping Center, 611 W. Poplar St., Suite A2, E'town, accepts clothing and household items, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays. For safety and ease of drop-off, donations should be boxed or bagged in a container that will not be returned. POC: Moira Taylor, mtaylor@hosparus.org.

Hot meals, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, Griffin Manor Senior Center, 1119 Johnstown Road, E'town. For those 60 and older. Paperwork must be completed 24 hours in advance. Monthly menus provided, \$2 donation per meal is suggested, but not mandatory. POC: Ida Kyle, 270-982-2909.

New Hope Family Life Center Hope on a Rack, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., first and third Saturdays, 1582 Hill St., Radcliff. POC: 270-351-8594.

St. Vincent DePaul Outreach, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 307 W. Dixie Ave., E'town. POC: 270-763-4249.

RestoreHouse, free food pantry ministry, New Horizon Baptist Fellowship Church, 864 W. Rhudes Creek Road, Glendale. Program is designed to help people in need of groceries. POC: office@newhorizonky.org.

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