

December 13, 2024

Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Jeffrey D. Zients
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Jake Sullivan
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Lael Brainard
Director, National Economic Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Delivered via email

Dear President Biden, Chief of Staff Zients, National Security Advisor Sullivan, and Director Brainard:

On behalf of millions of members and supporters who are sick and tired of subsidizing the profits of massive corporations, we write to express our deep alarm regarding reports that the Administration is considering extraordinary action to fast-track an electric power buildout for data centers by cutting corners on permitting and environmental protections.

Many of us have already written to you regarding the major threats and problems posed by data-center power demand, which are threatening regular people with increased electricity prices, drastically undermining climate goals by keeping coal-fired

power plants open and expanding gas-fired plants, and creating major nuisances and pollution for local communities.

This massive spike in energy demand is being driven by some of the wealthiest corporations in the world, including several that this Administration has investigated or pursued for anti-competitive business practices. An enormous energy giveaway to these corporations at the expense of consumers, a habitable climate, and local communities would be unconscionable and inexcusable—a sharp deviation from this Administration’s policies that could not only diminish, but deeply undermine, its historically significant climate achievements.

At the same time, a fast-track process could make valuable progress if done properly. To realize that potential, any move by the Administration must at a minimum:

- Require that all new electricity production be zero emission;
- Require big tech firms—not residential consumers—to cover all costs for the new power;
- Embrace the [recent FERC order disallowing any cost shifting to consumers](#) that occurs when existing generation capacity is diverted from the grid to serve data center load;
- Disallow any data center that relies upon natural gas from obtaining national security waivers or any other regulatory benefit;
- Provide some voice and choice to local communities that might be burdened or harmed by data center-build-outs;
- Require strong commitments from Big Tech firms that secure these conditions—contractual commitments if possible and, in any event, strong public commitments, to guard against the firms reneging and seeking a raw giveaway at the expense of the American public from the incoming Administration.
- Ensure good jobs at these power facilities, including paying living wages, respecting the right to organize and collectively bargain, ensuring worker health and safety, preventing discrimination, and implementing robust grievance mechanisms.

Advancing climate and other goals. A massive, federally driven build-out of clean energy would advance climate goals by helping critical industries scale up more rapidly.

Moreover, to the extent that extraordinary federal action on powering data centers is driven by urgent, legitimate national security or defense concerns, it is too important to be left to fossil fuels. Renewable energy is quicker to deploy and less costly than

fossil fuel infrastructure, and the resulting power supply would be more stable, secure, and immune to the price instability and geopolitical problems that plague fossil fuels. In short, if the nation is to undertake a massive power buildout for national security or defense purposes, then the only sensible energy sources are those that can be built the most quickly at the lowest cost, will have stably low prices over time, and are the least subject to disruption by extreme weather, terrorism, or foreign or domestic market manipulation.

Big Tech footing the bill. Requiring energy-hungry Tech firms to fund the build-out of data center infrastructure would place the costs where they belong, relieving American families and state and local governments from the burdens of being played off one another and subsidizing wealthy corporations. It is bad policy to force everyday consumers to subsidize the biggest corporations in the world for any reason. To make them shoulder the costs of powering a technology that is designed to maximize profits for those corporations at the consistent expense of a functioning internet, job security in dozens of professions, healthy political discourse, and a livable future would be unforgivable.

Responsible fast-tracking. Federal leadership on faster, more efficient processes to deploy clean energy more rapidly without sacrificing local communities or boosting fossil fuel production could help break well-known logjams on permitting and interconnection.

Before making any decisions in this critical area of national interest, we urge you to engage with stakeholders representing the constituencies that will be most impacted by these policies. And we implore you, please, to not take steps that will ensure this Administration's legacy is a framework for energy infrastructure that privileges a few massive corporations' efforts to secure public subsidies for their private gains while leaving working people stuck with higher energy bills and a riskier future.

Sincerely,

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