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# California State Senate

SENATOR  
**STEPHEN C. PADILLA**  
EIGHTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



COMMITTEES  
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION  
CHAIR  
MEMBER  
AGRICULTURE  
HEALTH  
HOUSING  
INSURANCE

December 1, 2025

Board of Supervisors  
County of Imperial  
940 West Main Street  
El Centro, CA 92243

Dear Honorable Members of the Board:

I write today to request information on a data center application in the county of Imperial.

The rapid advancement of AI has created a rise in demand for data centers. Proponents argue these facilities represent key economic opportunities, providing jobs and property taxes to the local community. However, the potential of data centers should not come at the cost of environmental and public health. Before any data center projects are approved by the County, a complete picture of the water usage and energy demands must be clarified, and area residents must be given a full picture of how the energy and water costs will affect them.

With careful planning, data centers can be an important economic opportunity for Imperial County. However, if done without full review and planning, they could have dire water, energy and air quality impacts for the local community and its residents. Ensuring the communities in the surrounding areas can provide input and are protected from unfair cost shifts and environmental dangers should be prioritized, particularly given the well documented negative impacts data centers have had in other parts of the nation.

Data center's energy demand requires expensive upgrades to the electrical grid in addition to increased energy demand. The cost of these upgrades is not always fully paid for by the large energy user, and other utility customers are left to shoulder the cost.<sup>1</sup> The increase in energy generation to power these data centers also come with an environmental and public health cost.

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<sup>1</sup> Ivan, Pen. "Data Centers' Hunger for Energy Could Raise All Electric Bills." The New York Times, May, 16, 2025.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/16/business/energy-environment/data-centers-utilities-electricity-bills.html>

Northern Virginia, which has the highest concentration of data centers in the world, face projected electricity cost increases of 25%, and aging fossil fuel plants are delaying retirement due to the increased energy demand.<sup>2</sup> These data centers using fossil fuels such as coal and diesel are estimated to create public health costs more than 5.4 billion dollars from air pollution, linking these facilities to cancer, asthma, and other health issues.<sup>3</sup> The impacts of data centers is not limited to energy costs and public health, but also water reliability.

In Newton County, Georgia, residents face skyrocketing water costs and the county is on track to be in a water deficit in five years.<sup>4</sup> Other data center proposals in the county have asked for up to 6 million gallons a day, greater than the county's entire daily use. Other developments in Georgia have asked for 9 million gallons a day, equivalent to 30,000 households. This is not an isolated issue. The water shortages caused by data center development is being felt across the US and exacerbates drought conditions. Data centers developing in Imperial County without proper review threaten affordability, public health, and other economic drivers in the community such as agriculture.

Recent information about the data center application in Imperial County has raised multiple questions on the potential negative impact for residents in the area. I am requesting additional information on the application.

- Under what grounds did the County as lead agency determine that the proposed facility exempt from CEQA?
- Did the facility provide a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration?
- What is the water source for the data center?
- What is the energy source of the data center?
- Are the on-site generators backup only? What is the power source?
- What is the distance of the nearest resident to the data center?

There is an urgent need to balance environmental justice and health with economic opportunity, and CEQA provides a valuable tool for the local community to be informed on the environmental impacts of planned developments. Input from residents to prevent rising energy costs, water degradation, and air pollution should remain a priority when pursuing economic opportunity. I also urge you to coordinate with Imperial Irrigation District to ensure sufficient energy and water can be supplied to these facilities.

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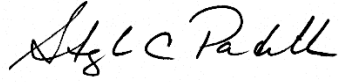
<sup>2</sup> Blackhurst, Michael, Cameron Wade, Joe DeCarolis, Anderson de Queiroz, Jeremiah Johnson, and Paulina Jaramillo. "Data Center Growth Could Increase Electricity Bills 8% Nationally and as Much as 25% in Some Regional Markets." Carnegie Mellon University, July 16, 2025. <https://www.cmu.edu/work-that-matters/energy-innovation/data-center-growth-could-increase-electricity-bills>.

<sup>3</sup> Criddle, Cristina, and Stephanie Stacey. "Pollution from Big Tech's Data Centre Boom Costs US Public Health \$5.4bn." Financial times, February 22, 2025. <https://www.ft.com/content/d595d5f6-79d1-47eb-b690-8597f09b39e7?sharetype=blocked>.

<sup>4</sup> Tan, Eli. "Meta Built a Data Center next Door: the Neighbors' Water Taps Went Dry. - The New York Times." The New York Times, July 14, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/14/technology/meta-data-center-water.html>.

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact my office through Emily Zhou, legislative aide, at (916) 651-4018 or at [Emily.Zhou@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Emily.Zhou@sen.ca.gov). Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen C. Padilla". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" being more prominent.

Senator Stephen C. Padilla  
18<sup>th</sup> Senate District