How Do Data Centers Contribute to Climate Change?

WHAT ARE DATA CENTERS?

Data centers are high tech warehouses full of the servers that hold the data and processing power used for every transaction, social media page, and typical website action. The state of Virginia, alone, has 537 data centers - with many more to come.

THE PROBLEM

Data centers use a tremendous of energy. A typical center requires the same amount of energy as 18,750 homes. Recently proposed data centers can require up to three times as much power. Dominion Energy, Virginia's largest electrical utility, anticipates building up to six new gas "peaker" plants over the next 10-15 years to meet growing demand. Although data centers do provide jobs and revenue to local communities, these gas plants will produce a lot of additional greenhouse gas emissions. If this energy came from renewable resources, concerns about climate change would be greatly reduced.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. Support green energy expansion and grid modernization (storage, transmission, smart technologies) at the state and local level.
2. Contact state assembly representatives to demand that data centers invest in renewable energy commensurate with their energy use.
3. Join the Data Center Reform Coalition, which urges lawmakers to study the impact of data centers.
4. Speak at local zoning and board of supervisors meetings about permitting of data centers.

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