Economic & Social Policy and International Affairs #4

Subject: Responsible and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence Data Center Development in Oregon

Authored by: Andrew Kihn and Mike Powers

Submitted by: SEIU 503 Retirees Local 001 (for the Climate Justice Committee)

WHEREAS, Oregon is experiencing rapid growth in large-scale data centers, including new facilities supporting Artificial Intelligence (AI), which require significant amounts of electricity, water, land, and public infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Oregon workers, families, farmers, Tribes, rural communities, and low-income ratepayers must not bear the costs of unchecked data center expansion through higher utility bills, depleted drinking water supplies, reduced irrigation access, or increased pollution of groundwater, wetlands, rivers, and aquifers; and

WHEREAS, data centers must be planned and regulated to prevent excessive strain on Oregon's electrical grid, avoid shifting infrastructure upgrade costs onto residential customers, and ensure that corporate growth does not undermine energy affordability for working households; and

WHEREAS, Oregon has a responsibility to protect the climate by requiring new large-load industrial users, including AI data centers, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, maximize energy efficiency, minimize water-intensive cooling practices, and invest in additional clean and renewable energy resources rather than increasing reliance on fossil fuel generation; and

WHEREAS, responsible economic development must include strong labor standards, including prevailing wages, apprenticeship utilization, project labor agreements, neutrality agreements where appropriate, community workforce agreements, and high-road labor standards that create family-wage union jobs for Oregon workers in the construction, operation, maintenance, and long-term support of these facilities; and

WHEREAS, Oregon should prioritize workforce development, registered apprenticeships, and training pipelines that prepare union workers, displaced workers, and historically underrepresented communities for careers connected to data center construction, electrical infrastructure, clean energy generation, and facility operations; and

WHEREAS, multinational technology corporations seeking to build the newest and largest AI data centers in Oregon are drawn by Oregon's strategic location, existing transmission access, clean energy potential, and water resources, and therefore should not require additional tax breaks, subsidies, or financial incentives from Oregon taxpayers to support private profit; and

WHEREAS, labor unions have a critical role in working with climate organizations, community coalitions, environmental justice advocates, utilities, Tribes, public agencies, and legislators to shape policies that ensure data center growth serves the public good rather than corporate extraction; now therefore,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that SEIU Local 503, OPEU, shall actively engage in the development of policy, administrative rules, sideboards, and legislation governing AI and large-scale data center development in Oregon to ensure protections for water quality, drinking water supplies, irrigation systems, wetlands, and public health; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SEIU Local 503, OPEU, shall advocate for policies requiring data centers and other large-load industrial users to pay the full cost of their energy demand and infrastructure impacts, ensuring that residential ratepayers and small businesses are not forced to subsidize private corporate expansion; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SEIU Local 503, OPEU, shall oppose tax abatements, special tax incentives, and other public subsidies for private data center development as corporations already have strong market incentives to locate in Oregon; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SEIU Local 503, OPEU, shall support policies requiring enforceable high-road labor standards, including prevailing wage, apprenticeship utilization, project labor agreements, community benefit agreements, and strong workforce training requirements for all publicly supported or regulated data center projects; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SEIU Local 503, OPEU, shall advocate for strong climate and environmental protections, including limits on excessive water use, safeguards against water pollution, responsible land use siting, clean energy procurement requirements, and measures to prevent increased greenhouse gas emissions associated with data center expansion; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SEIU Local 503, OPEU, shall collaborate with labor, climate, environmental justice, and community coalitions to promote a responsible and sustainable buildout of data centers that lifts up and protects Oregon workers, families, public resources, and future generations.

IMPACT STATEMENTS

Financial: No fiscal impact

Equity: This resolution would have a positive impact in that it reduces environmental harm, creates standards of implementation, and supports similar initiatives. Because AI has been shown to misappropriate intellectual property and created works, this resolution may mitigate harm inflicted upon workers and protects their labor rights.

Legal: No legal impact

Political: This resolution directs SEIU Local 503 to be an active stakeholder in ongoing conversations about AI technology and Data Center development, including fighting for

large industrial users to pay their fair share in electrical costs and ensuring that all jobs are good jobs with high labor standards, among other things. This work is currently underway with the support of the Climate staff position that was created at the 2024 General Council. This resolution would further clarify our position, and affirm members' ongoing commitment to climate justice advocacy that is centered on the impacts to working people, a just transition, marginalized communities, and our members, including SEIU Local 49 members who do some of this work.