

DOCUMENT 1

America's data-centre backlash puts the AI boom at risk Opposition is spreading across the country

June 23rd 2026 The Economist

1. FROM THE top of the slide, which curves into a little backyard pool, the view as recently as April would have been of lush Ohio farmland, dense forest and pretty clapboard houses. Now it is of six giant weatherproof tents of the type used by the armed forces to house fighter jets or by aid organisers in disaster zones. These will soon contain perhaps \$30bn-worth of cutting-edge semiconductors. Along with a clutch of gas turbines to provide power, they occupy a site the size of an airport terminal. If Meta, the site's owner, stays on track to bring its "Prometheus" data centre online in 2026, it will dedicate an entire gigawatt (GW) of power—the amount needed to power as many as 1m homes, or roughly the output of a large nuclear reactor—to artificial intelligence.
2. The mammoth data centres of the future, capable of training frontier AI models in 2030, will not be in the urban clusters in Virginia or California that house most of America's server farms today, but in the emerging "Silicon Heartland" of Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio, or in southern states like Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Vast sums—as much as \$750bn by Amazon, Google, Meta, Microsoft and Oracle, plus billions more by various others—are being ploughed into investments in these places. An estimated \$3trn will go into AI data centres globally between 2026 and 2030. Much of that is earmarked for America. The money will expand total AI computing capacity, measured in the amount of power consumed by major data centres, from just under 12GW in America currently to as much as five times that amount by the end of the decade. And across the country, people of all political stripes are furious about it.
3. There is plenty to dislike: the ugliness of the buildings; the roar of generators and cooling systems; the skeleton army of new transmission towers criss-crossing the landscape; the fear of contaminated water. Surveys suggest that Americans would sooner live next to a nuclear plant than a data centre. The issue has surged in salience. Gubernatorial candidates facing voters in November are routinely quizzed on where they stand.
4. Already local activists are claiming scalps. At least 20 data-centre projects worth \$42bn, which would have used 3.5GW of power, were cancelled in the first three months of 2026 after local pushback; \$85bn-worth have been cancelled over the past three years, including small centres proposed by Amazon and Meta. Residents of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, are resisting Google's plans to build one there. Several townships in Michigan have passed moratoriums after OpenAI broke ground on a project in Saline despite local opposition.
5. Yet the resistance is more than simple NIMBYism. In April a survey by Pew Research, a pollster, found that Americans who have merely heard of data centres are just as opposed to them as those who live within five miles of one. [...] Sam Altman of OpenAI and Dario Amodei of Anthropic have spent years warning that AI will throw most people out of work or be turned to mass harm. Now the infrastructure they need is arriving on people's doorsteps, and it looks like something out of a war zone. Residents across America are standing up in council meetings begging for projects to be axed in the hope of slowing the technology's progress. Will they succeed? [...]

DOCUMENT 2

Americans don't know how to fight AI. So they're fighting data centers.

The data center revolt is a symptom of our political failure on AI.

by Marina Bolotnikova, Vox, 25 June 2026

On its surface, the national revolt against data centers seems simple: They are a nuisance, and people do not want them in their proverbial backyards. But I haven't been able to let go of the idea that there must be something much deeper driving the backlash against them, and few other subjects have confounded me more than trying to figure out what to think about it.

These facilities — the massive suburban and exurban warehouses that power AI, along with much of what we do on the modern internet — spew noise, have been accused of guzzling electricity and water, and have a halo of general ugliness around them. And over the past year-and-a-half or so, many Americans have gone from barely knowing what a data center is to having fiercely held opinions about them. Seventy percent of Americans, according to a recent Gallup poll, now say they would oppose one being built in their area. The environment tops their list of concerns. They're also disquieted by the idea of high-tech facilities buying up land from America's farmers and ranchers. Anti-data center campaigns have swept communities across the country, producing dozens of local moratoria on their construction.

These objections sound public-spirited enough. But as Vox's Eric Levitz and many others have written, many of the rationales for stopping the buildout of data centers, particularly the environmental case against them, have been overstated (more on that in a moment).

Yet grassroots anti-data center activists are hardly wrong to be worried about artificial intelligence — it is one of the most formidable policy problems we face today. AI's ultra-wealthy makers promise a world of unprecedented progress and prosperity, but also say they might eliminate everyone's job and possibly annihilate humanity in the process.

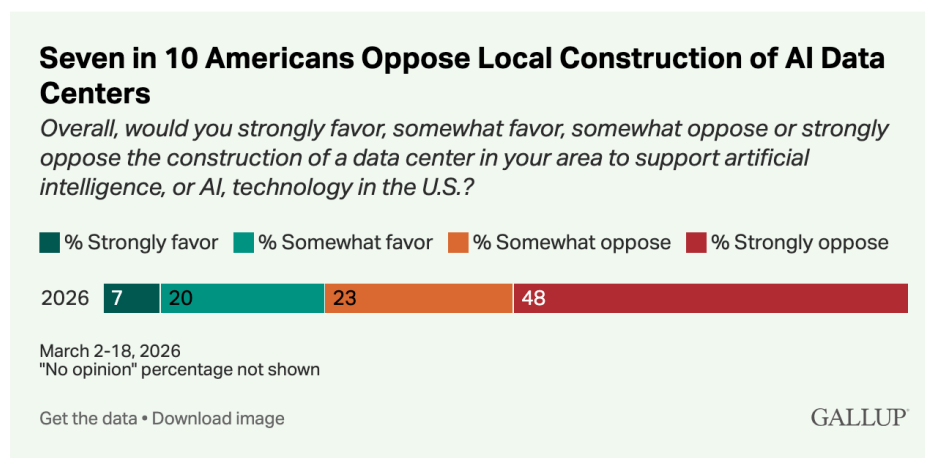
If you are terrified that AI is ushering in a future that will be miserable to live in, I fully share in that feeling (and would personally prefer to go back to a world before ChatGPT). And I think this sentiment, rather than any ecological anxiety, explains much of why Americans are suddenly fighting to ban the physical infrastructure on which AI and tech more generally depends, why they're so pessimistic about AI in general, and why college seniors graduating this spring have been booing the mere mention of AI off the commencement stage.

But it's a problem that stopping a data center locally feels like the only policy lever that an ordinary person can pull right now to try to slow down AI, because it's a blunt instrument that can't give us the outcomes we really want. Canceling data center projects town by town is unlikely to meaningfully slow AI adoption, and it certainly doesn't regulate AI use or protect us from its worst possible outcomes.

Instead, this approach traps us in a debate about relative trivialities rather than about one of our society's most important questions: how we will manage a technological and economic transformation that's already happening. And that dysfunction in turn prevents us from seeing any upside to AI and thinking about how we might broadly share it. It is, at bottom, a symptom of the same obstructionism that blocks us from addressing many of the biggest problems of our time, from green energy to housing and so much else, under similarly confused pretexts. [...]

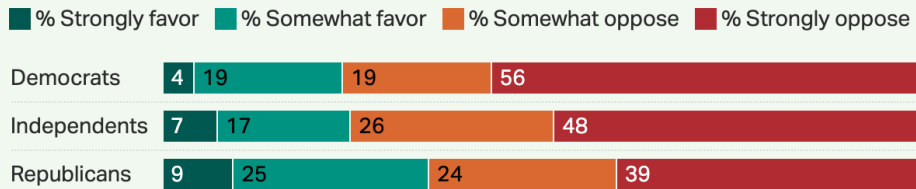
DOCUMENT 3 GALLUP POLL 13 MAY 2026

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/709772/americans-oppose-data-centers-area.aspx>



Opinions on Local Construction of Data Centers, by Political Party

Overall, would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the construction of a data center in your area to support artificial intelligence, or AI, technology in the U.S.?

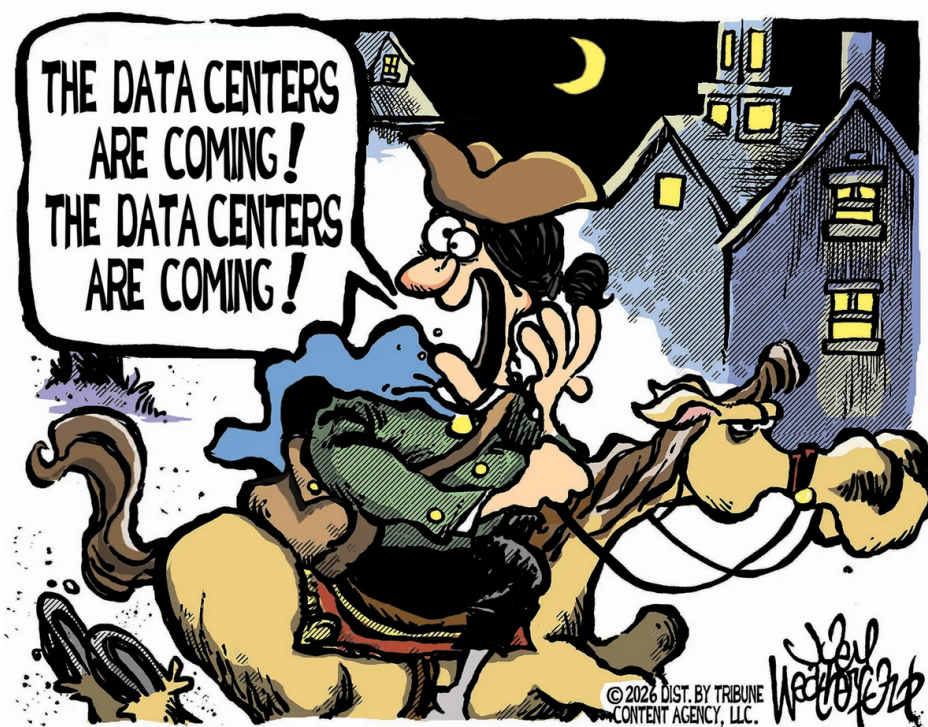


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"No opinion" percentage not shown

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27/6/2026



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