NAACP's 2026 Recommendations for Protecting Frontline Communities to Stop Dirty Data

As data centers expand, communities across the nation face new environmental and climate justice challenges including water contamination and depletion, air pollution, excessive energy use, quality of life concerns, and inequitable siting of the development. Guided by the NAACP Frontline Framework, coalition partner recommendations, and the regional breakout sessions from the NAACP's Stop Dirty Data Convening, this plan builds a proactive approach for a united front for local leaders, advocates, and organizers to build power, demand transparency, and protect community health through grassroots action and policy advocacy.

2026 Guiding Targets Summary

1. **Call for Moratoriums When Needed** — Pause new or expanding AI data centers until communities have start-to-end transparency regarding projects, environmental health monitoring for air, water, and soil, and comprehensive oversight measures in place.
2. **Push for Transparency** — End closed-door deals and non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). Insist on public access to environmental data, permits, and financial impacts. File public records requests and demand answers to any push back for data center or utility and public resource decisions for data centers using tax payer dollars.
3. **Identify and Track Projects** — Fill out the NAACP Community Report form to map where data centers are being proposed or built across the country.
4. **Show Up Locally** — Use the NAACP public education one pagers to highlight concerns and ask questions about AI data centers in your community. Attend and speak at zoning, planning, and city and county council meetings to demand fair classifications of data center infrastructure needs, meaningful community input, and health protections. Ask your local elected officials to adopt the Frontline Framework for their decision-making and city ordinances.
5. **Lead from Within** — Support community members to run for local offices that shape development, zoning, and environmental decisions.

National Action Priorities

   1. **Permitting Reform and Environmental Protections**
      o Demand that construction, air, and water permits include meaningful health and environmental impact assessments, quality of life assessments, comprehensive oversight, and close loopholes that may exist for data center requests for permits.
      o Advocate for qualified technical reviewers on permitting boards who come from the community.
      o Demand permitting reform, especially where health and equity are ignored in current processes.

2. **Transparency and Fiscal Accountability**

   o Expose non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) that hide deals from residents; File public records requests for meeting minutes, agendas, and correspondence on AI data centers.
   o "Follow the money" and use municipal bond ratings, tax break disclosures, and subsidies to hold local, state, and federal governments accountable.
   o Urge local transparency on how much water, energy, and taxpayer money data centers consume.

3. **Tracking Projects & Data Center Mapping**

   o Fill out the NAACP's Community Report form to help map current and proposed facilities.
   o Demand cumulative impact analyses with your local elected and appointed officials when multiple facilities are proposed in one region.
   o Spotlight patterns where AI data centers and other fossil fuel powered infrastructure cluster in formerly redlined or overburdened areas.

4. **People Power and mobilization**

   o Coordinate with your local NAACP branches, coalitions, faith groups, neighborhood associations, youth groups, housing, education, labor, and other environmental and climate justice organizations to turnout for zoning, planning, and legislative sessions, such as city and county council meetings, as well as meetings with state legislators. For most meetings, groups can bring up AI data center concerns, even if it is not on the agenda, during the open public comment portion of the meetings.

     • Demand data centers pay for any grid changes and set clear ratepayer protections
     • Demand data centers bring their own new clean energy
     • Demand conservation of non-renewable resources
     • Prohibit data center construction and land use on Superfund sites and other protected areas such as wetlands

   o Educate elected officials on environmental justice concerns, the Frontline Framework, and hold them accountable for long-term, people-centered policies that also include transparency and meaningful public engagement throughout any conversations.
   o Utilize the NAACP Community Benefit Agreement Guide to assist with local demands as needed.
   o Connect conversations happening in your community with fights happening nationally and globally.

5. **Leadership Development and Representation**
   o Train community members to serve on boards, councils, commissions, and planning bodies to have representation regarding data center decision-making.
   o Support frontline leaders to run for office to bring environmental justice values directly into local governance.

More resources available here

- NAACP Stop Dirty Data
- The Unequal Burden of Data Centers - Kapor Foundation
- Data Crunch Report – Center for Biological Diversity
- Cloudy Data, Costly Deals – Good Jobs First
- Reigning in Big Tech – Public Citizen
- Data Center Resource Page – Nature Forward
- Cost of the AI Boom – Union of Concerned Scientists