

**Answers to Questions from the October 14, 2026 webinar
UPHE Presents: Air pollution, wetlands, water and data centers**

Q: It isn't clear to me what your argument is. Is it that AI is bad and that keeping data centers out of Utah will slow the development of artificial intelligence globally? Really? And do you believe that countries hostile to our United States will reduce their emphasis on AI if we stop data center development here? Do you want China and Russia to dominate this new technology that has the potential to leave us behind?

There are numerous parallels between the nuclear arms and the AI race, but there are also important differences. The narrative that the only way the US can guarantee its own safety is to engage in an AI data center construction frenzy that consumes our diminishing water resources, fouls our air, contaminates our environment and accelerates the climate crisis in order to "beat" Russia and China in AI development is a false narrative pushed by the AI industry who stand to make enormous profits from that idea. Russia is not even in the game as far compute power.

[China has a fraction of the compute power of US based companies](#), and China is [not even pursuing the same kind](#) of high risk generative AI that US companies are.

More resources:

<https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/news/2026/07/21/the-real-ai-race-isnt-with-china/>
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/are-the-us-and-china-really-in-an-ai-race/>

The real race is between US companies, and it is all in pursuit of money and power. It is more likely that AI will turn out to be like electricity. Wealthy countries will find many ways to make it is useful, but there is simply no reason why we have to be willing to consume and destroy so much of our natural resources at this break neck speed. The danger from AI will ultimately come from US companies, not from foreign actors.

Q: Bernie Sanders has proposed to ban them, in legislation. Is it getting any traction?

It's hard to tell, I don't think we'll have any idea about that until after the election. Stay tuned.

Q: Brian, do you believe that your catty closing statement about building a data center near Mar-a-Lago makes your argument more appealing to the broad segment of society required to preserve the environment?

First, thank you for staying until the end of my presentation. You're obviously a Trump supporter or at least defender. Very few Trump supporters have environmental concerns, his attacks on

just about every environmental issue there is would make that a real disconnect. So I'm honored that a Trump supporter would attend one of our presentations.

Obviously Trump is the pivotal player in whether or not the federal government protects us from the harms of AI, so it's hard to give a meaningful presentation without acknowledging he has engineered a multi-pronged campaign to fast track data centers by wiping away numerous safe guards.

As for my "catty" statement—not sure that's the pejorative you're looking for. My references to Trump amounted to quoting his own words with the only additional commentary that he was the polar opposite of Fred Rogers, hardly an inflammatory attack, and given Trump's image of himself he would likely take that as a complement. Also given that Trump has made his political career on juvenile name calling, insulting, and throwing often extremely vulgar invectives at anyone and everyone that doesn't like what he's doing, it's pretty hard to make the case that anything I said was unfair or inappropriate. If Trump wants the public to accept all the undisputable environmental/public health harms of living near these AI data centers, then he shouldn't object to doing the same himself. And pointing out that asymmetry did not require any name calling.

Having said all that, I hope you learned something from our presentation. If you would like to learn more, or have questions about the information we offered we'd be happy to discuss and leave Trump out of the equation entirely. Thank you.

Q: Is nuclear power better? Or what is a good alternative?

Nuclear power creates both different problems and some of the same ones. Traditional nuclear power is very water intensive. There are new technologies that require less, but they are still experimental. These new technologies are unproven as to their safety. And the main problem with nuclear is that every phase of the nuclear fuel cycle emits various forms of toxic radiation into the environment. There is no safe level of radiation exposure, so the public health harms aren't exactly the same, but they are still substantial. People who live near nuclear plants and where uranium is mined have higher rates of cancer. That should matter to the rest of us. The heat island effect may actually be worse because nuclear is less efficient than natural gas, creating more waste heat per unit of electricity created. Finally, we haven't solved the problem of long term storage of nuclear waste that remains hazardous for thousands of years. It's immoral to place that burden on future generations.

Renewable energy (wind solar) would be much better, but powering data centers that way would also require an enormous amount of resources. So the question is, "exactly what are we gaining from the AI data center construction frenzy," and so far the answer seems to be primarily a lot of harm, with little benefit.

Q: I am in my nineties. It is difficult for folks in my generation can deal with all this new technology. Can it be said that such ones have wisdom? Such older folks can have more time to speak to these issues of humanity not seeking what is truthful for all of us? Are we creating false idols? Basically, we creating our own hell. Can we for example work with Salt Lake Senior Centers where elders gather or perhaps in other venues and dialogue face to face?

Congratulations on being in your nineties. I think older people (I'm one of them) can provide the wisdom of lived experience that younger people simply don't have. And yes we should be engaging people in senior citizen centers and soliciting their input on issues like whether all the sociologic disruptions and environmental consequences caused by the AI industry are really worth it.
