

National Black Church Initiative Supports Community Benefit Agreements for Data Center Development

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [National Black Church Initiative](#)

(NBCI), a coalition of 150,000 African American and Latino faith communities comprising 27.7 million members, supports the development of data centers with legally enforceable Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs). We believe that if these CBAs are negotiated

in good faith, both the community and our nation's businesses can mutually benefit.

“

The church must play a constructive role, balancing the need for our members to work and pay their bills and at the same time promote technology that will enhance the quality of life for all of us.”

*Rev. Anthony Evans, President
of the National Black Church
Initiative*

Data centers are both controversial and critical to the artificial intelligence technologies undergirding the digital economy. Data centers house thousands of file servers and networking equipment to enable e-commerce, data analytics, health care, and other functions of a connected society. Data centers provide much of the infrastructure necessary to support the continued development and use of digital technologies by individuals, communities, governments, and businesses.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church

Initiative, says, “The church must play a constructive role of balancing the need for our members to work and pay their bills and, at the same time, promote technology that is going to enhance the quality of life for all of us. This is why we strongly support CBAs.”

Despite the crucial role of data centers in the emerging economy, protests have arisen throughout the country over financial, energy, and environmental concerns. Plans to build data centers have faced opposition in Ohio, Georgia, Virginia, Arizona, and Indiana over concerns about increases in electric bills, noise and light pollution, and the potential effects of AI itself.

A Brookings Institution analysis describes a growing “techlash,” in which concerns about AI's impact on jobs, privacy, security, and human safety combine with concerns about wealth accumulation and corporate power in the technology sector. The analysis also notes that voter concerns about data centers have become issues in elections in New Jersey, Virginia, and

Georgia. These community concerns could affect the pace of data center construction and AI infrastructure development.

Community Benefit Agreements and other approaches have been proposed or implemented to address these concerns.

Key Types of Agreements and Approaches

- Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs):** Legally binding agreements negotiated between developers and community stakeholders that can establish requirements concerning resource consumption, environmental impacts, local employment, community investment, and other issues associated with development.

<https://fas.org/publication/data-center-community-benefit-agreements/>

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-community-benefit-agreements-are-necessary-for-data-centers/>

- Federal Voluntary Pacts:** Proposed White

House agreements with technology companies, including efforts intended to prevent data centers from raising household electricity rates or destabilizing the electrical grid while facilitating power interconnections.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2026/02/09/trump-administration-eyes-data-center-agreements-amid-energy-price-spikes-00772024>

- State Guardrails and Standards:** State-level requirements, such as Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's executive order establishing standards for data center development, including provisions concerning environmental compliance and the use of non-disclosure agreements by state agencies.

<https://www.axios.com/local/pittsburgh/2026/08/18/shapiro-data-center-rules-executive-order>

- Transmission and Utility Agreements:** Utility-level service and interconnection agreements, including those overseen through organizations such as PJM and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), that address large electrical loads and related utility issues.

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/microsoft-powerhouse-hillwood-data-center-service-ferc/828566/>

Core Provisions Included

- Transparency:** Requiring disclosure of information concerning energy, water, noise, and other potential impacts prior to project approval.
- Resource Caps:** Establishing requirements concerning water consumption, energy use, noise, traffic, and other environmental and infrastructure impacts.



Rev. Anthony Evans, President, National Black Church Initiative

- Grid Protection:** Establishing measures for large power users to reduce loads during grid emergencies.

These and other provisions can provide communities, developers, utilities, and government officials with a framework for addressing the potential benefits and impacts of data center development while supporting the continued growth of the nation's digital infrastructure.

Anthony Evans
National Black Church Initiative
+1 202-744-0184

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