

DATA CENTERS · ISSUE #1

INSIDE THE CLOUD

Adult / Community Edition · Prestige pilot

CREDITS

Inside the Cloud · Data Centers #1 · Adult / Community edition

Story and production: GOTB Consulting, Chicago

*Mateo Olmedo · The Auditor · Gridline · Commons · Undertow · Dess · Lena Ashgrove,
Channel 5*

AI-GENERATED ART, FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

All characters, the town of Prairie Bend and Channel 5 are fictional. Any resemblance to real people is a coincidence. No real logos are shown. Real places, agencies, utilities and institutions (DOE, IEA, Virginia's audit commission, Illinois DCEO, PJM, ComEd, consumer and market-monitor bodies) are named only where public sources are cited.

Every number was checked against public sources (see Sources). Disputed points carry a CONTESTED stamp and the strongest case on each side.

Nonpartisan: no parties, no politicians.

Lettering: Bebas Neue, Oswald, Kalam, Libre Baskerville, Courier Prime, Special Elite (set in Pillow; no fonts embedded).

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THE CAST



MATEO OLMEDO

The Level. Two chairs,
one level. Gun stays
holstered.



THE AUDITOR

Sees and reports.
Cannot stop anything.



GRIDLINE

Sees where current
flows. Cannot make new
power.



COMMONS

Neighbors and crews.
Strong only when people
show up.



UNDERTOW

Water is his beat.
Measures first.



DESS

Walks the racks.
Remembers when the load
was flat.



LENA ASHGROVE

Channel 5. On screen,
never in the action.



*Prairie Bend. 11:52 PM.
The building never sleeps.
Neither does he.*

MATEO

**EVERYONE WANTS AN ANSWER
ABOUT THIS BUILDING.**



MATEO

I BROUGHT TWO CHAIRS INSTEAD.

FACT FILE · 01



What builders look for: fiber, reliable and affordable power, land, nearness to customers, and tax incentives.



A TYPICAL AI-FOCUSED DATA CENTER DRAWS WHAT 100,000 HOUSEHOLDS DO.



THE LARGEST NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION: TWENTY TIMES THAT.

FACT FILE · 02



VERIFIED

A typical AI-focused data centre uses as much electricity as 100,000 households; the largest under construction will use 20 times that.

Source: IEA, Energy and AI, Executive summary (2025)

GOTB / DC FILE

LENA · ON SCREEN

U.S. DATA CENTERS: 58
TERAWATT-HOURS IN 2014, 176 IN
2023, ABOUT 4.4% OF THE
NATION'S POWER.



Rain outside. A rising line inside.

LENA · ON SCREEN

THE 2028 PROJECTION RUNS FROM 6.7
TO 12%.



FACT FILE · 03



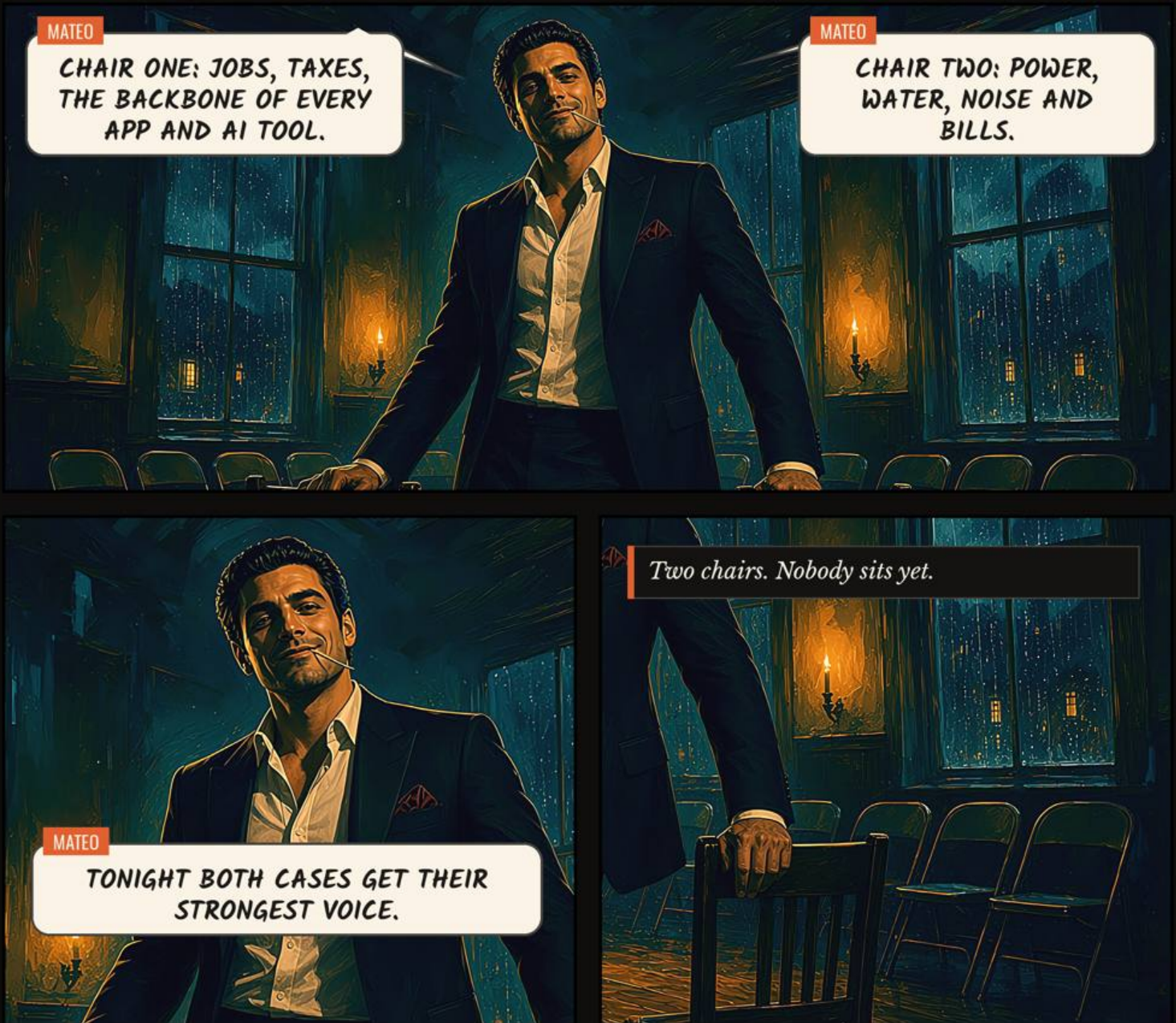
VERIFIED

U.S. data centers used about 4.4% of U.S. electricity in 2023 (176 TWh, up from 58 TWh in 2014). DOE's 2028 projection: 6.7% to 12% (325–580 TWh), a range, so it is labeled CONTESTED.

Source: U.S. DOE press release (Dec 20, 2024)

GOTB / DC FILE

HEARING ROOM



FACT FILE · 04

Virginia study: the industry supports about 74,000 jobs, \$5.5 billion in labor income and \$9.1 billion in GDP a year, mostly from construction. In mature markets, data centers can be up to 31% of local revenue.

Source: Virginia JLARC, Data Centers in Virginia (2024)

GOTB / DC FILE

DESS

FOR YEARS THE LOAD STAYED FLAT
BECAUSE THE EFFICIENCY KEPT UP.



DESS

AI SERVERS ENDED THAT AROUND
2017.

The racks never sleep. Neither does the meter.

FACT FILE · 05



U.S. data center electricity use stayed flat at about 60 TWh in 2014–2016 thanks to efficiency gains; growth restarted around 2017 with AI and GPU servers.

Source: LBNL, 2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report

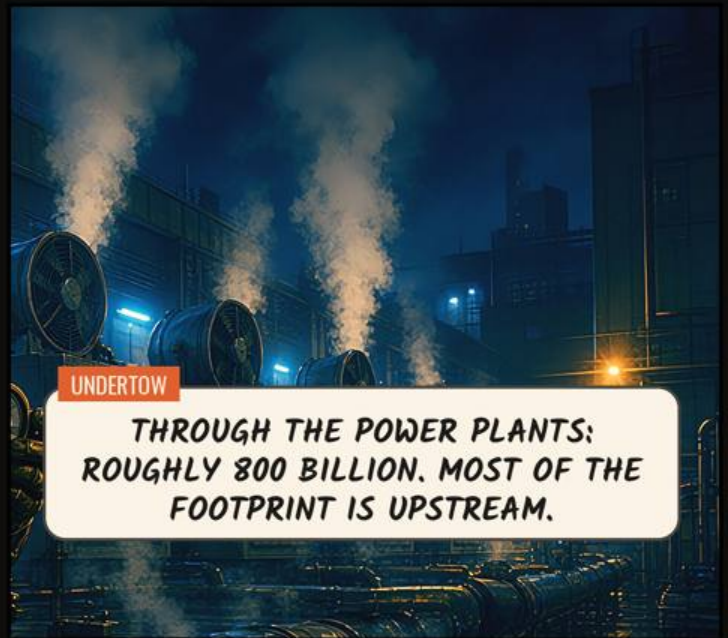
GOTB / DC FILE

COOLING YARD



UNDERTOW

ON-SITE USE: ABOUT 66 BILLION LITERS IN 2023.



UNDERTOW

THROUGH THE POWER PLANTS:
ROUGHLY 800 BILLION. MOST OF THE
FOOTPRINT IS UPSTREAM.

FACT FILE · 06



VERIFIED

U.S. direct (on-site) data center water use: 66 billion liters in 2023 (about 17.4 billion gallons), up from 21.2 billion liters in 2014. Indirect water through power plants: about 800 billion liters.

Source: LBNL, 2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report

GOTB / DC FILE



FACT FILE · 07



REPORTED

Large sites can use up to 5 million gallons a day, the needs of a town of 10,000-50,000 (EESI, REPORTED). In Virginia, most data centers use about as much water as a large office building or less; a few use much more (JLARC, VERIFIED).

Source: EESI (Jun 25, 2025); Virginia JLARC (2024)

GOTB / DC FILE



COMMONS

PEAK BUILD: ABOUT 1,500 WORKERS
FOR 12 TO 18 MONTHS.



COMMONS

OPERATIONS: ABOUT 50, HALF
CONTRACTORS, WELL PAID.



COMMONS

THAT GAP IS THE WHOLE ARGUMENT.

FACT FILE · 08

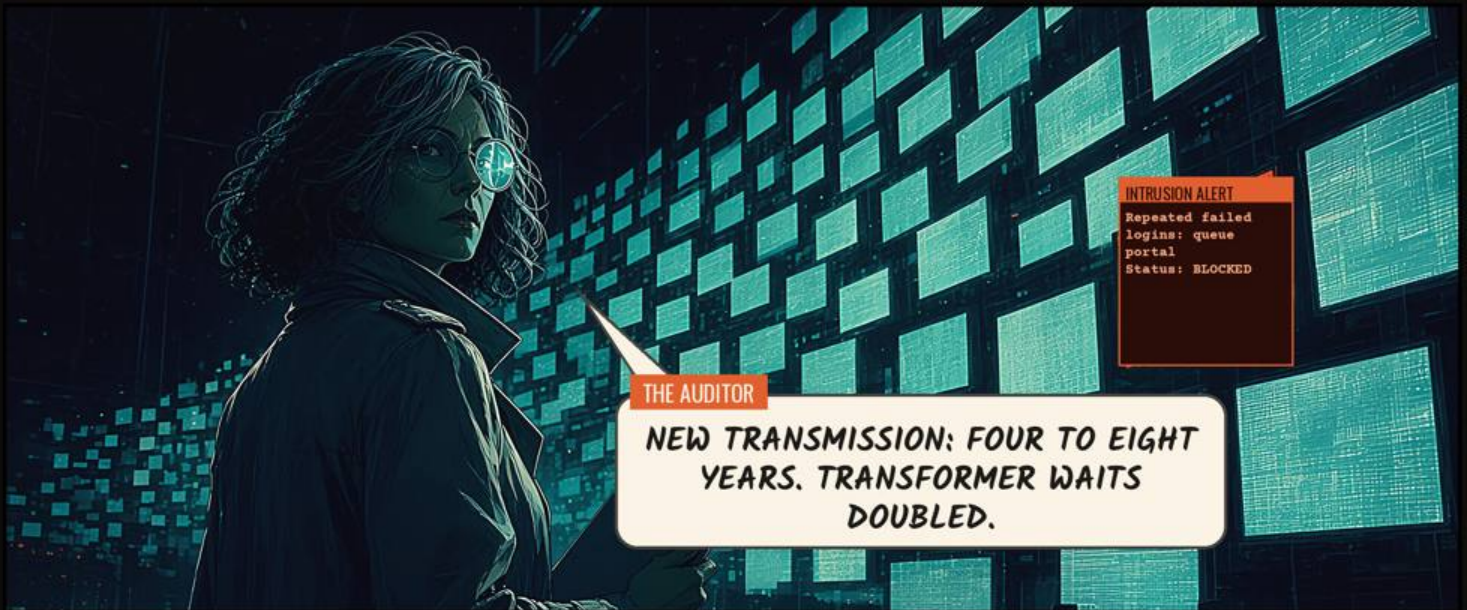


VERIFIED

About 12-18 months to build one building, with about 1,500 workers on site at peak. A typical 250,000 sq ft site has about 50 full-time workers, about half of them contractors; the jobs pay well.

Source: Virginia JLARC, Data Centers in Virginia (2024)

GOTB / DC FILE



FACT FILE · 09



VERIFIED

About 20% of planned data center projects could be delayed by grid limits; new transmission lines take 4-8 years, and waits for transformers and cables have doubled.

Source: IEA, Energy and AI, Executive summary (2025)

GOTB / DC FILE



FACT FILE · 10

CONTESTED

Summer 2025: ComEd's power price rose 45%; ComEd estimated bills up 10-15%, about \$10.60 a month on average, for a year. CUB blamed PJM 'policy problems'. PJM's independent market monitor called data center load growth 'the primary reason' for high 2025/26 capacity prices.

Source: CUB release (Jun 4, 2025); Monitoring Analytics, PJM IMM (Jun 3, 2025)

GOTB / DC FILE



MATEO

THE COUNTER-CASE: VIRGINIA FOUND DATA CENTERS PAY THEIR FULL COST OF SERVICE TODAY, AND LOCALITIES CAN DRAW UP TO 31% OF REVENUE FROM THEM.



MATEO

THE RISK IS TOMORROW'S BUILD-OUT.



He switched chairs. The numbers stayed put.

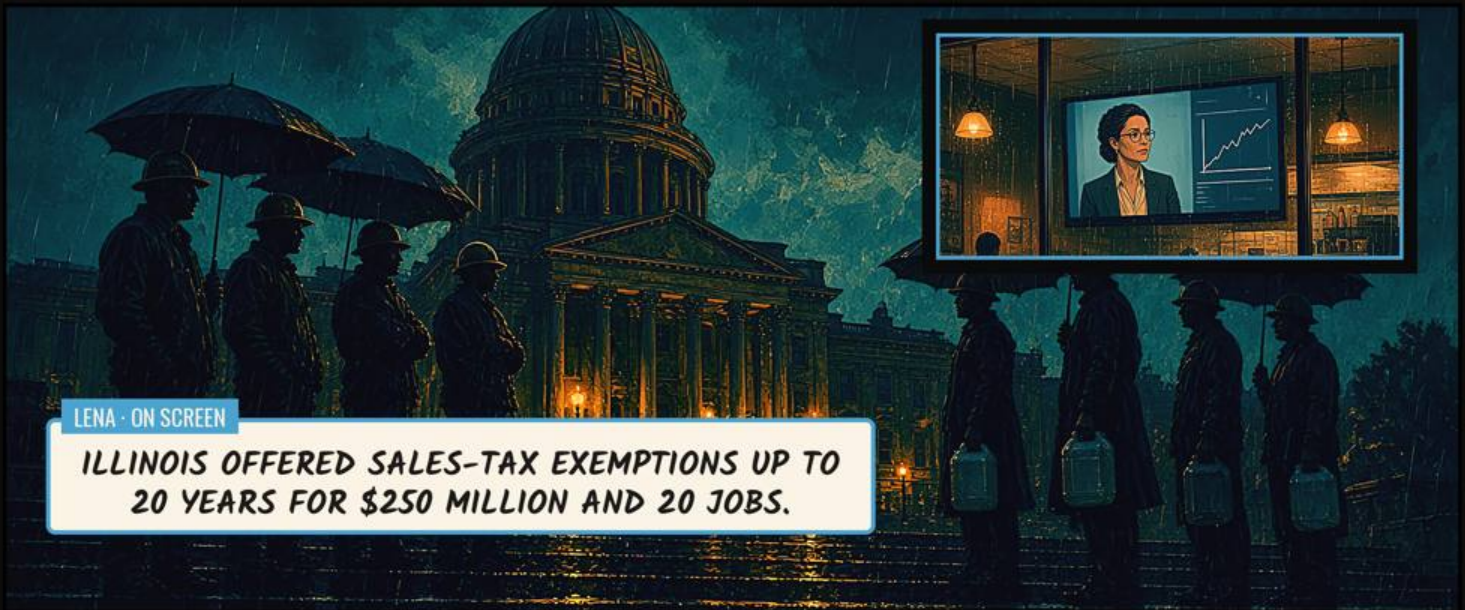
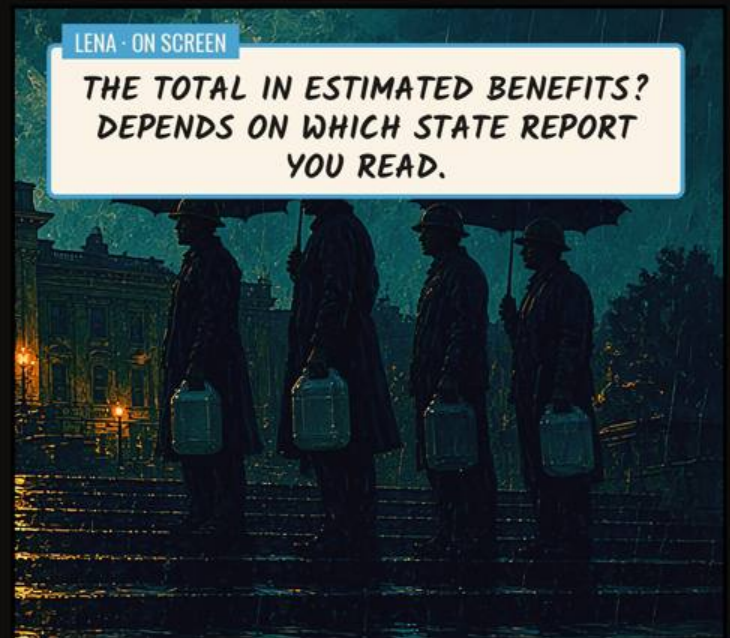
FACT FILE · 11

VERIFIED

Virginia found data centers pay their full cost of service today, but growth likely raises everyone's costs (+\$14 to \$37 a month, real, by 2040 for a typical Dominion home). Stranded-cost risk if demand forecasts don't come true.

Source: Virginia JLARC, Data Centers in Virginia (2024)

GOTB / DC FILE



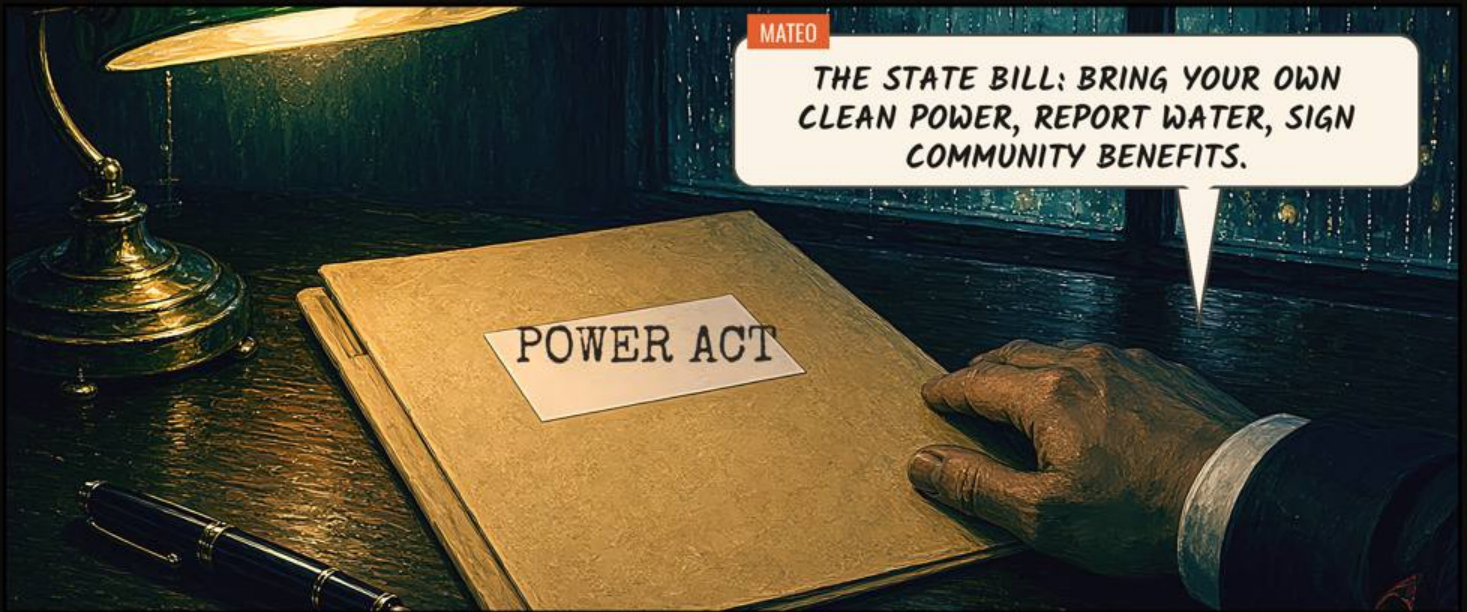
FACT FILE · 12

VERIFIED

Since 2019: state and local sales/use tax exemptions for up to 20 years (5-year certificates) for at least \$250M invested, 20+ full-time jobs at 120% or more of the county median wage, and green certification. New applications paused since July 1, 2026; existing agreements honored. Program total: state reports differ (under review).

Source: Illinois DCEO, Data Center Investment program page and reports

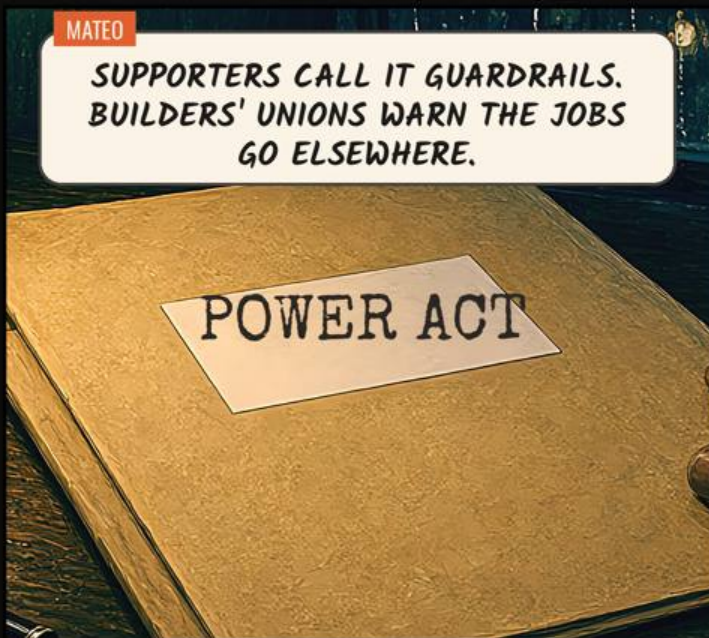
GOTB / DC FILE



MATEO

THE STATE BILL: BRING YOUR OWN
CLEAN POWER, REPORT WATER, SIGN
COMMUNITY BENEFITS.

POWER ACT



MATEO

SUPPORTERS CALL IT GUARDRAILS.
BUILDERS' UNIONS WARN THE JOBS
GO ELSEWHERE.

POWER ACT



MATEO

VETO SESSION: NOVEMBER AND
DECEMBER.

FACT FILE · 13

The POWER Act would require data centers to pay for their own (renewable) generation, report water, sign community benefits agreements and be more transparent. Concern: onerous rules could push projects and tax revenue out of Illinois; an operating engineers' union opposes it over construction jobs (REPORTED). Veto session: Nov 17-19 and Dec 1-3, 2026.

Source: Capitol News Illinois (May 30, 2026); WAND News (Oct 16, 2026);
GrayStak Media (Oct 15, 2026)

GOTB / DC FILE

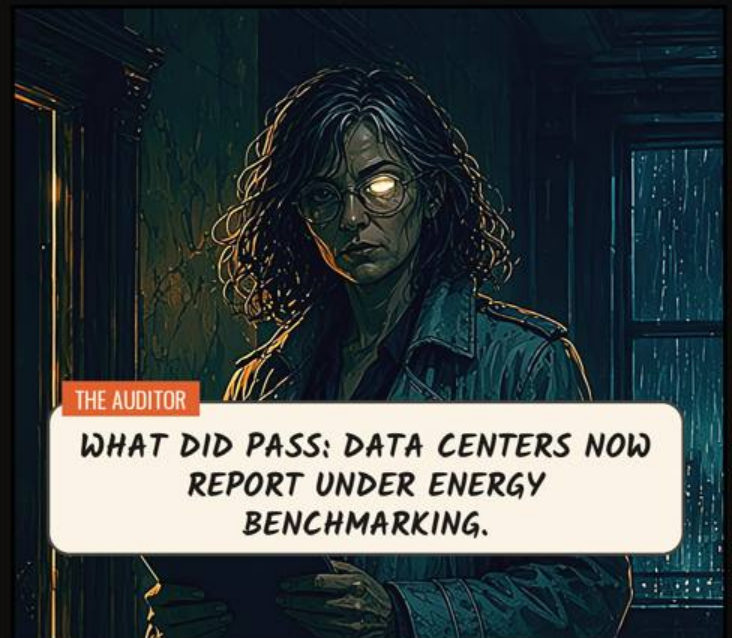


THE AUDITOR

CHICAGO: TWO
PROPOSED PAUSES, IN
RULES SINCE
SEPTEMBER 23, NO
HEARING.



Light under the door. Nobody coming out.



THE AUDITOR

WHAT DID PASS: DATA CENTERS NOW
REPORT UNDER ENERGY
BENCHMARKING.

FACT FILE · 14



REPORTED

A one-year citywide moratorium and a six-month one were sent to the Rules Committee on Sep 23, 2026; no hearing as of Oct 15; next Council meeting Dec 8. Passed: data centers are now covered by Chicago's energy benchmarking ordinance.

Source: WTTW News (Sep 28, 2026); GrayStak Media (Oct 15, 2026)

GOTB / DC FILE



COMMONS

A 1929 PRINTING PLANT, NOW A MILLION-SQUARE-FOOT INTERNET HUB WITH 70-PLUS NETWORKS.



COMMONS

OUT NEAR THE AIRPORT, ONE SUBURB COUNTS 20 DATA CENTERS.



COMMONS

DOWNTOWN TOWERS ARE CONVERTING. THE ROOM DECIDES HOW.

FACT FILE · 15



REPORTED

350 E. Cermak Rd.: a former 1929 printing plant refitted for telecom in 1999; 8 stories, 1,005,500 sq ft, 70+ network providers (operator page, VERIFIED). Elk Grove Village: 20 data centers operating (mayor's figure, Jun 2026, REPORTED). Downtown conversions include 400 S. LaSalle St., 2538 S. Wabash Ave. and 300 W. Adams St.

Source: Digital Realty facility page (Oct 2026); Medill Reports (2019); NBC Chicago (Jun 23, 2026); GrayStak Media (Oct 15, 2026)

GOTB / DC FILE



MATEO

TWO CHAIRS, ONE LEVEL. POWER, WATER, PUBLIC WORKS: PLAN THEM IN THE OPEN AND BOTH CHAIRS CAN SIT DOWN.



GOTB Consulting, Chicago: infrastructure and procurement for the power, water and public works these projects depend on.

BY THE NUMBERS

4.4% · 176 TWh

Share and amount of U.S. electricity used by data centers in 2023 (58 TWh in 2014). 2028 projection: 6.7-12% (CONTESTED as a range). (DOE)

100,000 HOUSEHOLDS · 20x

Electricity of one typical AI-focused data center; the largest under construction use 20 times that. (IEA)

66B · 800B LITERS

U.S. data center water, 2023: on-site vs. indirect through power plants. (LBNL)

1,500 · 50

Peak construction workers vs. full-time operations staff at a typical site. (Virginia JLARC)

\$10.60/MONTH (CONTESTED)

ComEd estimate, summer 2025, for a year; cause disputed: auction rules vs. data center growth. (CUB; PJM IMM)

20 YEARS · \$250M · 20 JOBS

Illinois sales-tax exemption terms; new applications paused July 1, 2026. Program total: state reports differ (under review). (Illinois DCEO)

TWO CHAIRS, ONE LEVEL

The strongest case on each side, labeled. Nonpartisan.

CHAIR ONE: BUILD

Construction jobs (about 1,500 at peak), local tax revenue (up to 31% of local revenue in mature markets) and the backbone of every app. Virginia found data centers pay their full cost of service today.

CHAIR TWO: POWER, WATER, BILLS

About 50 permanent jobs per typical site. Rising demand on the grid, water use that depends on the cooling, a contested bill increase, and stranded-cost risk if forecasts miss.

WHAT BOTH CHAIRS SHARE

Plan power, water and public works in the open; label what is proven and what is projected.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR HEARING

How will the site be cooled? Who pays for grid upgrades? What incentives apply, and what does the community get back? How many permanent local jobs?

SOURCES

Full list with fact IDs: FACT_BASE.md, sources.md, RONIN_FACTCHECK.md (GOTB internal).

U.S. DOE · LBNL · IEA

DOE data center report release (Dec 20, 2024); LBNL, 2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report; IEA, Energy and AI, Executive summary (2025).

WATER · VIRGINIA

Environmental and Energy Study Institute, Data Centers and Water Consumption (Jun 25, 2025); Virginia JLARC, Data Centers in Virginia (2024).

BILLS

Citizens Utility Board release (Jun 4, 2025); Monitoring Analytics, PJM IMM analysis of the 2025/26 Base Residual Auction (Jun 3, 2025).

ILLINOIS · CHICAGO

Illinois DCEO program page and data center reports; Capitol News Illinois (May 30, 2026); WAND News (Oct 16, 2026); WTTW News (Sep 28, 2026); GrayStak Media (Oct 15, 2026).

CERMAK · ELK GROVE

Digital Realty facility page (Oct 2026); Medill Reports (2019); NBC Chicago (Jun 23, 2026).

ABOUT GOTB CONSULTING

WHO WE ARE

A Chicago firm working on infrastructure and procurement for the systems communities depend on.

DATA CENTERS

Siting, delivery and community questions.

POWER

Grid connections, substations and lines.

WATER

Supply, treatment and cooling.

PUBLIC WORKS

Roads, pipes and public spaces.

THE END



TWO CHAIRS, ONE LEVEL.

Plan them in the open.

GOTB CONSULTING · CHICAGO

Data centers · Power · Water · Public works

AI-generated art, fictional characters