

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Data centers must be held accountable to taxpayers

Georgia faces daunting challenges in attempting to achieve timely transition to clean energy and reliable environmental management. These efforts are made significantly more difficult by conflicting business interests. Preventing the ongoing degeneration of our natural resources and life-support systems is undermined by short-term profitmaking ventures that finance immense corporate political influence, dangerously delaying or discrediting well-justified policy reforms.

It's not surprising that Georgia's ranking as the nation's most 'business-friendly' state is achieved with trade-offs that consistently oppose actions to improve the accountability of economic development. Unfortunately, being business-friendly has been achieved by unfairly shifting both economic and environmental costs of development onto taxpayers and citizens.

By promoting datacenters with tax-breaks, low-cost labor and infrastructure, as well as energy made cheaper for industry by increasing residential power-bills, Georgia is risking the depletion of state water resources and unfairly endangering other water-dependent activities. Moreover, with approval of the Public Service Commission, Georgia Power is planning to burn polluting, heat-trapping fossil-fuels to generate most of the 10,000 megawatts of electricity to be demanded by data-storage facilities.

Ensuring rigorous data-center accountability is urgently needed to safeguard the public and natural resources. Decisions about datacenters and other major development projects must be diligently deliberated by using mandatory, publicly reviewed assessment and monitoring of the consequences – on public health, property value, energy costs, water supplies, wildlife, and environmental quality. Developers of datacenters and other major ventures must also be required to use clean energy.

Georgians deserve being protected from harmful exploitation by inadequately controlled business expansion.

David Kyler  
Center for a Sustainable Coast