Policy Matters Ohio

STATEMENT

November 4, 2026
Ben Stein
bstein@policymattersohio.org
304-685-8354

Voters want data center regulation; lame duck bills should not make it harder

Yesterday's election included local ballot measures related to data centers in 18 Ohio communities. In all 18 of them, a majority of voters opted to restrict, regulate, or oppose data centers. Policy Matters Ohio Executive Director Hannah Halbert issued the following statement:

"Ohioans used yesterday's local ballot measures to weigh in on the growing impact of data centers in their communities and the need for stronger oversight. They took every available opportunity to restrict, regulate, or oppose them.

"As lawmakers enter lame duck, they should not undermine the ability of the incoming administration to enforce any new regulatory framework they put in place. State lawmakers are indeed considering legislation, such as HB 11, HB 775, and HB 1024, that would hamstring the Acton administration — including its ability to implement state-level regulations on data center development.

"Before their most recent break, the General Assembly proposed HB 646, which included a range of measures to rein in data center development. That legislation, while inadequate, would be a step in the right direction. However, the same GA may also try to ram through changes that would essentially give its legislative leadership veto power over decisions by the very state agencies charged with turning the broad legislative language into rules and regulations that protect Ohioans.

"Ohioans expect government to solve problems, not create new obstacles. If the General Assembly passes legislation regulating data centers this year, lawmakers should also ensure that when Governor-elect Acton takes office in January, she has the same authority as previous governors to carry out the law as intended.

"The lame-duck session will offer the outgoing legislature a final opportunity to address issues Ohioans have made clear they care about. That means passing meaningful data center regulations, stabilizing the childcare sector through the WIN Act (HB 484) and removing unnecessary barriers that make it harder for people with criminal records to rebuild their lives and participate fully in their communities (SB 418). Ohio needs policies that respond to public concerns and institutions capable of putting those policies into practice."

Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.