

Data Center Resistance in the United States: Local Refusal and the Politics of Moratoria

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— Early Discussion Draft —

Abstract

Residents across the United States are organizing against data centers proposed by some of the world's largest technology companies. The firms offer jobs and tax revenue; nearby residents face the facilities' power demand, water use and noise. How do communities challenge these firms, and when do local governments act? We matched an inventory of 2,165 data center projects to 457 moratoria and other restrictions adopted in 348 counties by August 2026 to examine when governments restricted development and how those decisions related to construction. Counties were most likely to adopt their first restriction in the six months after a project announcement. More than half of the adopting counties had no project listed in the assembled inventory, extending the reach of restrictions beyond places with recorded proposals. Restrictions also spread between counties connected by opposition groups. After one county adopted a restriction, adoption was more frequent in other counties where the same group was recorded, including counties that shared no border. Projects in counties that restricted within six months of announcement were less likely to have started construction, after accounting for announcement month and reported capacity. We argue that local approval requirements give organized residents a means to challenge firms with far greater resources. A firm's threat to build elsewhere gives it bargaining power over officials who want its investment, while communities seeking to keep the facility out achieve their objective when it leaves.

Keywords: Capital mobility; business power; local governance; policy diffusion; community opposition; data centers.

1. Introduction

On March 3, 2026, the city council of Birmingham, Alabama, approved a 180-day pause on new data center applications. The two projects already in permitting, the DC Blox expansion and the Nebius AI Factory, remained eligible to proceed under the rules in force when they applied (City of Birmingham 2026). Independence, Missouri, also paused new applications while allowing the Nebius project already under review to proceed under existing rules (City of Independence 2026). By August 2026, governments in 348 American counties had adopted 457 restrictions on data centers since January 2017, most of them in 2026.

In the usual account of local development politics, officials and the people who own and develop land want growth. They compete for projects that bring private investment and taxable property into their jurisdiction (Molotch 1976; Peterson 1981). The neighbors of a data center face its power demand, water use and noise, giving them reasons to oppose a project their officials want. When do local governments restrict data centers, and how do those restrictions relate to construction? To find out, we assembled an inventory of 2,165 data center projects from four public sources and matched it to the 457 restrictions across all 3,222 American counties and county equivalents.

We argue that a firm's ability to use the threat of building elsewhere depends on what the people deciding on its permit want. In the standard account, the threat gives the firm power because local officials want to retain the investment and the revenue it brings (Peterson 1981). Residents and council members seeking to keep a facility out have the opposite objective: the firm gives them what they want when it leaves. Officials seeking investment compete to retain it by offering tax incentives, a common part of negotiations over location (Jensen 2018).

A council faces different decisions as a project advances. Before permits are issued, officials decide what development to allow; later, they must also deal with the approvals already granted. Land purchases and contracts commit the developer to the site, and permits establish rights under the rules in force when they are issued. The Birmingham and Independence moratoria illustrate how councils handle applications at different stages: both pause new applications while allowing named projects already under review to proceed. Some commitments are made before the public hears about a project, through confidential site selection and negotiations over infrastructure and incentives (Wood and Phelps 2020; Kollar 2026a).

We expect counties to adopt restrictions soon after a project is announced, when the proposal attracts public attention and officials face decisions about its development (H1). Governments preparing for future investment also have reasons to adopt rules beyond the counties with recorded projects (H2). Restrictions should spread between counties where the same opposition group works, since those connections give officials and residents access to experience from other disputes (H3). We then compare construction outcomes for projects in counties that adopted early restrictions and for other projects announced in the same period. We use the 872 projects with a known county and an announcement date recorded to the month for this comparison.

Local restrictions emerge early in a project's public life and spread beyond places with recorded proposals. Counties were most likely to adopt their first restriction in the announcement month or the five months that followed, with an estimated increase in monthly adoption about five times the increases in later periods. Adoption was also more frequent after another county where the same opposition group was recorded had adopted, including counties that shared no border. More than half of adopting counties, 193 of 348, had no project listed in the assembled

inventory. Restrictions were also associated with lower construction rates, with the largest difference where counties acted before any opposition action appeared in our sources. Projects in counties adopting restrictions within six months of announcement were nine percentage points less likely to have started construction by August 2026, after accounting for announcement month and capacity.

Local approval decisions give residents a means to challenge companies whose financial resources far exceed their own. Councils decide whether promised jobs and tax revenue justify the demands a facility places on electricity, water and nearby households. Residents seeking to keep a facility out achieve their objective when the developer leaves, changing the political value of a firm's threat to build elsewhere. Opposition groups working in several counties offer a route for sharing applications, hearing dates and experience from earlier disputes while developers still need permission to proceed. Who can use these opportunities matters for the distribution of development costs. Research on housing and wind energy shows how local participation favors privileged residents and how opposition is concentrated in wealthier or predominantly White communities (Einstein et al. 2019; Stokes et al. 2023).

2. Theory

2.1 Mobile capital, local refusal and timing

Research on business power ties corporate influence to low public attention (Culpepper 2010). Within technology firms, developers describe pressure to implement features that conflict with their own social values (Miklian and Hoelscher 2025). Data centers attracted public opposition in 2025 and 2026, and councils adopted hundreds of restrictions. What those decisions meant for a developer depended on which applications the rules covered, as the

exemptions in Birmingham and Independence demonstrate. Much of the siting literature starts with a dispute over a named facility; the policy inventory also identifies governments regulating data centers in counties with no project in our records (Stokes et al. 2023; Reece et al. 2026). The decisions raise a further question about who bears the costs of development when one community refuses it and the developer seeks another site. Research on housing and wind siting connects local opposition to who participates in decisions and where projects are built (Einstein et al. 2019; Stokes et al. 2023).

In the city limits argument, capital and labor move across local borders, giving local governments a reason to pursue development because their tax base depends on it (Peterson 1981). The growth machine literature describes the coalition behind that pursuit: landowners, developers and allied officials who share an interest in more intensive land use (Molotch 1976; Logan and Molotch 2007). Landowners gain from higher property values and developers from new building, while the costs of development fall on a wider population. The competition for investment also gives firms access to public subsidies. State and local governments have paid incentives for location decisions that firms had already made (Jensen 2018; Slattery and Zidar 2020). Officials keep offering them partly because attracting a corporate headquarters affects how voters judge incumbents (Yang 2024).

The standard account assumes that the people deciding on a project want the investment. We use refusal to mean their choice to withhold permission from a proposed facility. Who controls that choice varies across places: officials weigh general welfare against benefits concentrated among influential constituencies, and dependence on an established industry shapes both government capacity and the firm's bargaining position (Bhaumik et al. 2024; Elder 2025). A council that refuses permission denies the developer use of that site. Securing a data center

location requires coordination with local government over planning and infrastructure, as the Luleå and Stockholm cases demonstrate (Ramos Cáceres et al. 2024).

Residents who organize against a facility want different things. Some want it kept out, some want time to examine the proposal, and others want better terms. A pause answers a demand for time; abandoning the development answers a demand for exclusion. Social movement research compares outcomes with participants' demands and considers what agreeing to those demands would cost the target (Amenta et al. 2005; Luders 2010). Table 1 distinguishes these outcomes and specifies the records needed to establish each one.

Once a multinational has invested, its assets are tied to the location, shifting bargaining power toward the host government (Vernon 1971). A council deciding whether to admit a new facility faces an earlier stage of that relationship. Spending tied to a site begins with options on land and agreements over infrastructure, giving developers reasons to defend the location before construction starts; officials who supported the project also have reasons to protect those decisions. Google's proposed data center in Luxembourg stayed suspended for years while the firm retained its options and the unfinished development became an issue in local politics (Carr and Madron 2025). Much of the preparation occurs out of public view through confidential negotiations and site-selection intermediaries, and disputes over disclosure also surround incentive renegotiations (Wood and Phelps 2020; Jensen and Thrall 2021). In Oregon, fiscal incentives, utility arrangements and land-use decisions were negotiated as parts of the same development process, extending beyond the planning hearing (Kollar 2026a).

Residents learn about a proposal at some point in this process, often after negotiations have begun. A council hearing objections before it grants permits is deciding whether to approve development; a council hearing them afterwards must also address the approvals it has issued.

Public attention changes the conditions under which business exercises influence, and firms' own conduct can disrupt the political relationships on which that influence rests (Culpepper 2010; Bell and Hindmoor 2024). A firm's response to social demands also depends on whether those demands enter company decisions through binding rules or through political pressure (Miklian 2026b). Siting research examines who opposes a named project and whether their opposition changes its prospects (Giordono et al. 2018; Dokshin 2016; Stokes et al. 2023). We examine when local governments adopt their first restriction, using the public announcement as the dated event around which to compare their decisions. The development histories in Luxembourg and Oregon place that announcement within a longer process of spending, negotiation and approval. H1 (timing): a county's monthly rate of first restriction is higher in the six months beginning with a data center announcement than in later months, before announcement, or in counties with no recorded project.

2.2 Preparation and the spread of restrictions

Local governments also prepare rules for development they expect in the future. Staff must understand the industry and draft an ordinance before a council can vote on a pause. Research on data centers shows local leaders preparing land and institutions years before anticipated investment arrives; the same administrative capacity is available to officials who want to restrict development (Burrell 2020). County wind ordinances evolved through experience with regulation, and research on solar development likewise examines where local ordinances govern construction (Winikoff 2022; Lee et al. 2026). Studies of data center opposition have followed disputes over named facilities (Kollar 2026a; Reece et al. 2026). Preparing for future proposals gives officials elsewhere a reason to act as well, extending

regulation beyond the sites listed in a project inventory. H2 (geography): most counties that adopt a data center restriction have no project recorded in the assembled inventory.

Borrowing from other governments reduces the work of preparing a local policy. Officials can use another council's account of the problem and the ordinance it adopted, then decide how those rules fit their own jurisdiction (Berry and Berry 1990; Boushey 2010). Governments learn about a policy's political acceptability as well as its performance, and a shared understanding of an issue spreads before agreement on a particular response (Gilardi 2010; Gilardi et al. 2021). For a council preparing data center rules, another jurisdiction's moratorium supplies an example of how to pause applications during that work. Research on state policy uses the order of adoption to estimate which connections link governments adopting the same policy (Desmarais et al. 2015; Harden et al. 2023).

Opposition groups provide one route for officials and residents to learn about restrictions elsewhere. In municipal fracking politics, coalition partners and a group's position among other organizations shaped who proposed policy (Arnold et al. 2017). Local restrictions on renewable energy cluster near earlier adopters, while policies also spread between states governed by the same party (Ko et al. 2023; DellaVigna and Kim 2026). A group working in two counties offers a connection through which residents and officials can exchange an ordinance or contact someone involved in the earlier dispute. Our test identifies these connections from records naming the same group in both counties. We count the connection from the following month and compare counties in the same state and month, so the recorded presence of the group comes before the adoption being examined. H3 (organizational ties): after a county adopts a restriction, other counties where the same opposition group has been recorded have a higher rate of first restriction during the next three months, including counties that share no border with the adopter.

2.3 *What a pause governs*

We expect fewer construction starts where councils adopt restrictions to stop proposed facilities, with the largest difference where residents organized against development before the vote. The applications already filed also affect what a council achieves through a pause. A project under review remains eligible to proceed when the ordinance exempts that application. We therefore compare construction across counties with and without opposition recorded before adoption, while examining the application rules in the two municipal examples. Birmingham's pause covers new applications for facilities of 20 megawatts or more and allows the DC Blox expansion and Nebius AI Factory, both already in permitting, to proceed under existing rules (City of Birmingham 2026).

The sequence from announcement to restriction involves several possible routes to a council vote. Residents press officials to act, officials prepare rules themselves, and financial or infrastructure problems affect projects while those decisions are under way. Reporting also brings projects, groups and policy decisions into the record together. We examine these sequences by dividing projects according to whether an opposition action was recorded in the county before its first restriction and by comparing restriction dates with cancellation dates. These comparisons establish which event was recorded first and identify cases for examining how officials reached their decision. Work on political mediation examines how movements change specific decisions, including whether officials respond to their demands (Amenta et al. 2005; King 2008).

State governments can take the decision away from a council. State preemption, through which state law limits local authority, has expanded in response to local policy initiatives, and planning research identifies the same conflict over data center regulation (Riverstone-Newell

2017; Goodman et al. 2021; Goodman and Hatch 2024; Kollar 2026b). Within a jurisdiction, homeowners with time to attend hearings and a property interest in the outcome have disproportionate influence over land-use decisions (Einstein et al. 2019; Hankinson 2018; Marble and Nall 2021). A refusal also affects people beyond the jurisdiction when a developer seeks another site. Following the firm's subsequent proposals would show where that search leads and who faces the next development, extending the questions about unequal siting burdens examined in research on wind and polluting facilities (Stokes et al. 2023; Mohai and Saha 2015).

Table 1. Outcomes and the records needed to establish them

Outcome	What happens	Records needed
Regulatory adoption	A local government adopts a restriction	A dated ordinance or other policy instrument
Binding project coverage	The restriction applies to a particular project	Authority, project location, regulated use, effective dates, exemptions and application history
Delay	A project takes longer to reach a development milestone	Dated milestones and a comparison of development timelines
Permanent prevention	The proposed development is abandoned	Project history confirmed through extended follow-up
Conditional approval	A project is approved under changed terms	Documents specifying the revised terms or obligations

3. Data and Methods

3.1 Project and policy inventories

We match projects and restrictions by county. The project sources locate facilities by address and the policy sources identify the jurisdiction adopting an ordinance; both can be assigned to a county. The panel covers all 3,222 counties and county equivalents in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico during the 116 months from January 2017 to August 2026. We assembled the project inventory from Server Country, Compute Atlas, EPA air-permit

and facility records, and Epoch AI. We then grouped entries referring to the same development into a single project record, which we call a cluster. The inventory contains 2,165 clusters, of which 2,130 are assigned to 692 counties; 35 have no resolved county assignment. A cluster can include several phases of one campus. Where an operator or project name changed across sources, the release preserves the identifiers and source dates so readers can check how we linked the entries and classified continuation or cancellation (SI S2).

Restrictions come from the Moratorium Nation inventory, which covers several industries (Bommarito 2026). Of its 533 rows, two are aggregate entries and 531 map to a place. Among the place-based records, 490 have a usable month within our study period, and 466 of those explicitly identify data centers as a regulated sector. Removing nine records marked pending leaves the 457 restrictions in 348 counties used in the main analysis; we restore those nine in a second series of 466 records to check how they affect the results (SI Table S1). Each restriction enters the series at adoption and remains there even if it later expired, was replaced or was rescinded. The inventory's authors searched state by state from May through July 2026 and continued collecting records through August 19, 2026. Earlier restrictions entered as they came to the authors' attention, so we compare counties within the same calendar month to account for changes over time in both adoption and collection (SI S11).

To test H2, we classified the 348 adopting counties by their project histories at the month of first restriction. We used the entire project inventory, including cancelled developments, because a cancelled proposal still records a developer's interest in the county. A county enters the prior-project group when at least one project was announced in or before the adoption month or was dated to an earlier year. Where prior presence remains unresolved, a project dated only to the adoption year or lacking a date places the county in the unresolved group. The later-project

group contains counties whose recorded projects all follow adoption, and the final group contains counties with no project in the inventory. Table 2 reports these four groups; SI S2 gives the classification rules and the results after restoring pending restrictions.

3.2 Adoption panels and the construction comparison

The timing test compares a county's monthly rate of first restriction before and after its first recorded project announcement. A county enters the announcement group when its earliest announcement is dated to a month between February 2017 and August 2026 and every other recorded project is dated at or after that month. This rule identifies 271 counties; the 2,530 counties with no project in the inventory form the comparison group (SI Table S2). We then remove counties with an undated restriction because we cannot assign their first adoption to a month, leaving 262 announcement counties and 2,516 comparison counties. Each contributes one observation per month until its first restriction or August 2026. The outcome equals one in the month of first adoption and zero in earlier months, yielding 247 first adoptions in 321,054 county-months (Table 3).

We first estimate how the monthly adoption rate differs after a project announcement, comparing counties within the same calendar month and clustering standard errors by county. The outcome is whether the county adopts its first restriction that month, and the coefficient expresses the difference in percentage points. A second regression divides the period after announcement into months zero to five, six to eleven, and twelve onward; Figure 1 plots the three estimates, and we calculate the differences between the first period and each later period from that same regression. Counties leave the sample after their first restriction, following event-history practice for studying first adoptions (Berry and Berry 1990). SI Table S4 repeats the comparison with state-by-month effects, county effects, state-clustered errors, pending

restrictions restored, and August observations removed. To examine events before announcement, we count first restrictions by the number of months they precede it (SI Table S16). We also date the earliest local reporting on data center contention within each county, assigning outlets to counties through the 3DLNews directory (Ariyaratne and Nwala 2024).

The test of adoption among counties connected by opposition groups uses a larger sample: all 3,184 counties whose recorded restrictions have dates. It contains 367,746 county-months and 332 first adoptions, with each county again leaving the sample after its first restriction. We identify groups through the Data Center Opposition Tracker, a public dataset of local campaigns that records the organizations named in each dispute and the dates of the sources naming them.

We connect two counties from the month after the same group has been recorded in both. For each county-month, we count how many connected counties adopted their first restriction during the previous three months, separating neighboring counties from those that share no border. Separate regressions for these two connections compare counties within the same state and month and account for the county's own announcement status, unresolved project dates and the number of neighboring counties that adopted earlier. Comparing counties within the same state and month accounts for circumstances they share, such as a statewide policy debate. The model for counties that share no border also includes a connection based on assignment to the same news outlet's website in the outlet directory (SI S6; Table S9).

For construction, we compare projects in counties that adopted a restriction within six months of announcement with other projects whose announcement month is known. The sample contains 872 projects with a county assignment and an announcement month: 386 were recorded as started by August 2026, 395 as announced and 91 as cancelled. We call a project exposed

when its county adopted a restriction during the announcement month or the five months after it; 94 projects meet this definition, including 70 announced in 2026. We regress recorded construction status on this county exposure, announcement-month effects, the logarithm of one plus reported megawatts, and an indicator for missing capacity. The model compares projects announced in the same month and accounts for differences in reported size; standard errors come from 999 county-level bootstrap draws (Table 4).

A second regression divides the exposed projects according to whether an opposition action was recorded in the county before its first restriction, using the Data Center Opposition Tracker, movement records, the Crowd Counting Consortium and ACLED, and directly estimates the difference between those two groups. SI Tables S6 to S8 report alternative three-, nine- and twelve-month exposure windows, shifted policy dates, equal follow-up, bounds on twelve-month construction shares, and monthly models of starts and cancellations. The exposure measure pairs each project with restrictions adopted somewhere in its county; SI S8 lists the resulting 149 pairings of 94 projects with 115 distinct instruments.

4. Findings

4.1 Geography of restrictions

Most counties that adopted a restriction have no project listed in our inventory. Of the 348 adopting counties, 193 fall in this group, while 121 had a project announced in or before the month of their first restriction. Another 28 have projects whose dates leave the order unresolved, and six have projects first recorded after adoption. The prior-project group includes proposals later cancelled, because those proposals establish that developers had considered a location in the county before it acted (Table 2).

Counties with a recorded project adopted restrictions at nearly three times the rate of counties with no recorded project: 155 of 692, or 22 percent, compared with 193 of 2,530, or eight percent. The latter still form the majority of adopters because there are more than three times as many counties in that group. The 155 counties with projects consist of the 121 with a prior project, the 28 with unresolved timing and the six with a project first recorded after adoption. Restoring the nine pending restrictions adds seven adopting counties; the count with no recorded project becomes 195 of 355 (SI Table S3).

The restrictions are concentrated in 2026. Of the 457 in the main series, 388 carry a 2026 adoption date, 58 a 2025 date and 11 an earlier date. The inventory's systematic state-by-state search ran from May to July 2026, making 2026 both the year with the most recorded adoptions and the period of the fullest search. At the August snapshot, the inventory classified 364 restrictions as active, 39 as extended, 30 as replaced, 19 as expired and five as rescinded (SI S11).

Table 2. Project history at first recorded policy adoption

Project history	Counties	Percent
No project recorded in inventory	193	55.5
Known project at or before adoption	121	34.8
Project timing unresolved	28	8.0
Projects recorded only after adoption	6	1.7
Total	348	100.0

Note: Main series of dated restrictions explicitly covering data centers, adopted from January 2017 to August 2026.

4.2 Timing of first restrictions after announcement

Counties most often adopted their first restriction in the announcement month or the five months after it. Among the 262 announcement counties, 30 first restrictions fell in that period, six in the next six months and seven in months twelve to twenty-four (SI Table S16). First adoption is rare across the full panel. There were 247 such decisions across 321,054 county-months, about one adoption for every 1,300 monthly observations (Table 3).

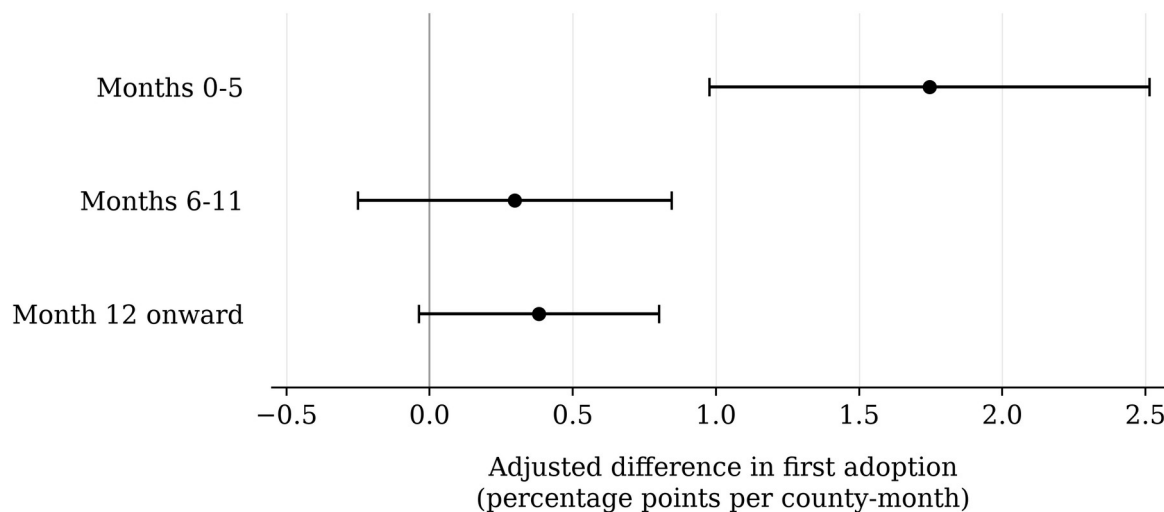
Comparing counties within the same calendar month, the estimated increase in monthly adoption after announcement is 0.84 percentage points, with a 95 percent interval of 0.48 to 1.20 (Table 3, column 1). The alternative specifications in SI Table S4 change the estimate by at most 0.2 points. Most of the increase occurs in the first six months: 1.75 points in months zero to five, compared with 0.30 in months six to eleven and 0.38 from month twelve onward (Figure 1). Calculating the differences between those periods directly confirms that the first period exceeds each later one. Both 95 percent intervals for those differences are above zero (SI Table S17).

Table 3. Regressions of first recorded policy adoption

Dependent variable: first adoption	(1) Month	(2) State-month	(3) County + month	(4) Timing bins
Post announcement	0.84 (0.18)	0.82 (0.18)	1.03 (0.22)	
Months 0-5				1.75 (0.39)
Months 6-11				0.30 (0.28)
Month 12 onward				0.38 (0.21)
Calendar-month effects	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
State-by-month effects	No	Yes	No	No
County effects	No	No	Yes	No
County-months	321,054	321,054	321,054	321,054
County clusters	2,778	2,778	2,778	2,778
First adoptions	247	247	247	247

Note: OLS coefficients in percentage points per county-month; county-clustered standard errors in parentheses. Each column is a separate regression. Column 4 includes the three timing indicators together, comparing those periods with pre-announcement observations and counties with no recorded project. Observation ends at first adoption. The sample contains 262 announcement counties and 2,516 comparison counties. Absorbed effects include the intercept. SI S3 and S11 report 95% intervals, alternative inference and direct comparisons between periods.

Figure 1. Timing of recorded policy adoption



Note: Points and 95% county-clustered normal intervals from Table 3, column 4, in percentage points per county-month. The comparison includes pre-announcement observations and counties with no recorded project. The model contains 321,054 county-months, 2,778 counties and 247 first adoptions.

Local reporting on data center contention sometimes precedes the first recorded project announcement. Of the 262 announcement counties, 225 have an outlet website assigned to that county alone in the 3DLNews directory. In 39 of these counties, we found contention reporting during the twenty-four months before announcement; the median lead was ten months (SI S10). Articles enter this count through the outlet's county assignment in the directory. Six counties also adopted their first restriction before the announcement month, four of them in the preceding two months (SI Table S16).

4.3 Adoption among counties sharing opposition groups

Counties where the same opposition group is recorded also adopt restrictions in succession. Across the larger panel used for this comparison, there is about one first adoption for every 1,100 county-months. The rate is much higher during the three months after a connected county adopts. Five of 48 county-months following adoption by a neighboring county with a

shared group ended in a first restriction. For connected counties that shared no border, twelve of 169 county-months ended in adoption (SI Table S10). The two sets overlap by 26 county-months and three adoptions, yielding fourteen distinct adoptions across 191 county-months.

The regression estimates how monthly adoption differs with each additional connected county that adopted during the previous three months. For a neighboring county with a shared group, the estimate is 6.61 percentage points, with a 95 percent interval of -1.10 to 14.32. For a connected county that shares no border, it is 1.34 points, with an interval of -0.23 to 2.91. These comparisons account for state and month, the county's own project status and earlier adoptions by its neighbors, using the controls in Section 3.2 (SI Table S9). Twelve of the fourteen distinct adoption events occurred where the organizational connection crossed a gap between counties, including three events also connected to a neighboring adopter (SI Table S10).

The news-outlet measure connects counties assigned to the same website in the 3DLNews directory. Among counties sharing a website with a recent adopter that shared no border, four of 203 county-months ended in adoption. The corresponding count for the two organizational connections combined is fourteen adoptions across 191 county-months. Accounting for the other variables in the regression gives an estimated difference of 0.36 percentage points for the shared-website connection, with a 95 percent interval of -1.29 to 2.01 (SI Tables S9 and S10).

4.4 Construction status and early county restrictions

Fewer projects had started construction in counties that adopted a restriction within six months of announcement. By August 2026, fifteen of the 94 projects in this group had a recorded start, compared with 371 of the other 778 projects, or sixteen percent against 48 percent. The two groups differ in how long they had to begin construction: 70 of the 94 exposed projects were

announced in 2026, giving them at most eight months of follow-up. After accounting for announcement month and reported capacity, projects in counties with early restrictions were 9.46 percentage points less likely to have started (95 percent interval for the difference: -18.39 to 0.06; Table 4, column 1). The difference remains negative with alternative exposure windows, shifted policy dates and equal follow-up (SI Table S6).

The 94 exposed projects divide into 58 in counties with an opposition action recorded before their first restriction and 36 in counties with no prior action recorded in the four sources. Fourteen of the 58 projects in the first group had started construction, compared with one of the 36 in the second (SI S10). After accounting for announcement month and capacity, projects in counties with a prior recorded action were 2.43 percentage points less likely to have started than the other 778 projects. For projects in counties with no prior recorded action, the difference was 20.97 points. The estimated difference between the two exposed groups is 18.53 points, with a 95 percent interval of 4.80 to 32.40 (Table 4, column 2).

Table 4. Regressions of recorded construction status

Dependent variable: construction started	(1) Pooled exposure	(2) Prior-opposition split
Early county restriction	-9.46 (4.78)	
Early restriction, prior action recorded		-2.43 (6.26)
Early restriction, no prior action recorded		-20.97 (4.78)
Log(1 + reported MW)	-0.37 (1.22)	-0.28 (1.22)
Capacity missing	-15.12 (7.25)	-14.28 (7.26)
Announcement-month effects	Yes	Yes
Projects	872	872
County clusters	495	495
Recorded construction starts	386	386
Exposed projects	94	58 / 36

Note: OLS coefficients in percentage points; county-bootstrap standard errors in parentheses (999 valid draws; seed 20260906). An exposed project is in a county that adopted a restriction during its announcement month or the following five months. Both columns include the displayed capacity terms and absorbed announcement-month effects, including the intercept. Missing capacity is set to zero with its indicator. Column 2 compares both exposed groups with the same 778 other projects. The difference between those groups is 18.53 points, with a 95% percentile interval of [4.80, 32.40]. The pooled 95% interval is [-18.39, 0.06]. SI S4 and S10 report sensitivity and chronology checks.

Twenty-one of the 94 exposed projects were classified as cancelled by August 2026, eleven in counties with prior recorded opposition and ten in the other group. Comparing each assigned cancellation month with the first restriction in that project's six-month exposure window, the restriction came first in eight cases, both fell in the same month in six, and cancellation came first in seven. Seven of the cancellation dates come from the report documenting the cancellation, which places the event at or before that report's month. SI Table S8 reports monthly models of starts and cancellations using the dated events. SI Table S7 gives

bounds on twelve-month construction shares for the 430 projects with a full year of follow-up through July 2026; seven are exposed, and 153 construction starts in the comparison group have no recorded month.

5. Discussion

A firm's threat to build elsewhere puts pressure on officials who want its investment; officials seeking to keep a facility out achieve their objective when it leaves. Local restrictions also differ in which projects they cover. Birmingham paused new applications for facilities of 20 megawatts or more filed after March 3, 2026, while preserving the rules for two projects already in permitting. Independence's pause covers new data center and battery storage applications and exempts the Nebius project already under review (City of Birmingham 2026; City of Independence 2026). These councils retained the ability to review rules for future applications while allowing the named projects to continue through the existing process. In the national construction comparison, the largest difference is among the 36 projects in counties where the restriction preceded any opposition action recorded in our sources, with one project recorded as started by August 2026. State legislatures also decide how much authority councils retain over such development. The state-policy file contains 438 data center bills, of which 399 have a last action in 2025 or 2026, placing the local decisions within the wider conflict over state and municipal authority (Goodman et al. 2021; SoRelle and Fullerton 2024; Kollar 2026b).

Beginning with a disputed facility determines which local decisions enter a study of siting politics. Research has used those disputes to examine who opposed development and what happened to the proposal (Giordono et al. 2018; Stokes et al. 2023; Reece et al. 2026). Our project inventory covers 155 of the 348 adopting counties; the policy records identify another 193 with no recorded project. Studying decisions in those counties requires starting with the

local government, using policy documents and meeting records such as those collected by LocalView (Barari and Simko 2023). The same records offer a way to trace what officials learned through organizations working across counties, including how an earlier dispute shaped their understanding of the problem and their choice of response (Gilardi 2010; Gilardi et al. 2021). Our organizational dates establish when a group had been recorded in both counties, while meeting accounts and interviews provide the detail of what participants exchanged. Local reporting supplies another dated account of contention, including the coverage preceding project announcements in 39 counties, and connects public decisions to the electoral accountability studied in research on the local press (Snyder and Strömberg 2010; SI S10).

Who benefits from a refusal depends on who participates in the decision and where the developer seeks to build next. Homeowners with time to attend hearings and file comments are overrepresented in land-use decisions and use those procedures to oppose nearby development (Einstein et al. 2019). Tracking an operator's later proposals would identify the communities approached after a refusal and the people asked to bear the demands on electricity and water that the first community sought to avoid. The present inventory records the proposed location and source-reported status of each project, including 91 classified as cancelled; subsequent applications provide the records needed to follow those firms beyond the cancelled sites (SI S2).

5.1 Limitations

Announcements, opposition and restrictions respond to the same development pressures, and problems with financing or grid connections affect a project's prospects before a council acts. The comparisons measure associations within those sequences. Seven exposed projects have cancellation dates before the relevant restriction and six have cancellation and restriction in the same month. Month-level dates leave the order of a hearing, application and vote within a

month unresolved, while developers choose when to announce publicly and sometimes do so after residents and officials have learned of the proposal. Construction dates are also incomplete: of fifteen exposed projects recorded as started, twelve have no resolved start month, two began before the relevant restriction and one began after it. Seventy of the 94 exposed projects were announced in 2026, leaving a short period in which to observe construction by August. The pooled construction estimate has a 95 percent interval from -18.39 to 0.06 percentage points. Longer follow-up is needed to distinguish projects that eventually proceed from those abandoned or moved; the twelve-month comparison currently contains seven exposed projects among 430 with a full year of observation (SI Tables S6 and S7).

Documentation is uneven across places and years: the policy inventory's systematic search ran from May to July 2026, and its authors flagged 147 of the 457 eligible records for source verification. Language-model coders checked source excerpts for a sample of 100 tracker records and found full support for the named group in seven and partial support in ten (SI Table S13). AI answer engines studying armed conflicts with sparse reporting made more factual errors than they did on extensively covered conflicts (Miklian 2026a). A group's date marks its first appearance in the sources for a county; establishing when the group began its work requires a separate history of the campaign. Groups' choices about where to work also shape these connections, since an organization has reasons to concentrate its efforts in receptive counties. The adjacent and nonadjacent estimates rest on five and twelve adoption events, respectively, and both county-clustered intervals include zero. Establishing what the second council learned from the first requires the documents or interviews recording that exchange. The four opposition sources differ in collection procedures and geographic coverage, making the split in Table 4

depend on which actions they captured before adoption, as research on protest data illustrates (Dorff et al. 2023; Fisher et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2016).

The construction measure matches projects and restrictions within a county, whereas legal coverage depends on the authority adopting the rule, the land it governs, the regulated use, operative dates and application history. The review file contains 149 pairings of 94 projects with 115 distinct instruments; the pairings involve 63 city, 31 county, 31 township, thirteen town, nine village and two other entries (SI S8). A city ordinance applies within the city's territory, leaving projects elsewhere in the county under their own jurisdiction's rules. Checking the dates also establishes whether a restriction had expired or been replaced before the project decision. Independence expressly exempts the Nebius project already under review, yet the project meets our county exposure definition. Removing that project changes the estimated construction difference to -10.48 percentage points, with a 95 percent interval of -19.73 to -0.72 (SI Table S6). The institutional argument rests on American land-use arrangements, in which counties and municipalities exercise local authority and residents contest applications through hearings. Authority is allocated differently where a national agency selects sites, and it also varies within our sample of 52 state-level jurisdictions.

6. Conclusion

Between January 2017 and August 2026, local governments in 348 American counties adopted 457 restrictions on data centers. Most adopting counties have no project listed in our inventory; among counties with dated announcements, first restrictions cluster in the announcement month and the five months that follow. Adoption is also more frequent after a county where the same opposition group is recorded adopts, including when the two counties share no border. Projects in counties adopting early restrictions were less likely to have started

construction by August 2026, after accounting for announcement month and capacity, and the largest difference was among projects in counties with no opposition action recorded before the restriction. We argue that the value of a firm's threat to build elsewhere depends on what local decision-makers want: officials seeking investment compete to retain it, while officials seeking exclusion achieve their objective when the developer leaves. A council adopting a pause must also decide what happens to applications already filed. In Birmingham and Independence, councils halted new applications while allowing specified projects already under review to proceed under existing rules (City of Birmingham 2026; City of Independence 2026).

AI Use Disclosure Statement:

The author used Claude Opus 4.8 (Anthropic) as an adversarial reviewer to assess a first draft of this document, to build tables and verify data, and to take a final copyediting / references pass. OpenAI Codex Astra was used to verify and audit the replication package against the underlying data, e.g. in coding and denominator corrections and ensuring consistency between the paper and replication materials. All AI-assisted output was carefully reviewed and accepted, who take full responsibility for all material herein. Neither tool was used to develop the primary argumentation or to assist in the authors' substantive interpretation.

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Data Center Resistance in the United States: Local Refusal and the Politics of Moratoria

Supporting Information

Measurement documentation and supplementary analyses

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S1. Policy sources and eligibility

The supplied 533-row policy inventory is joined by moratorium identifier to the 531 geographically mapped records. The two aggregate entries have no unique local geographic interpretation. A usable date must identify a calendar month between January 2017 and August 2026. Eligibility then requires the explicit data_center sector tag. Multi-sector instruments are retained when that tag is present; crypto-only and other non-data-center records are excluded. The primary analysis also excludes nine records marked pending, despite a usable date, because the status fields do not consistently establish completed adoption. The broader series restores those nine records as a sensitivity, yielding 466 instruments.

A recorded date is not independent legal validation. Systematic discovery covers May-July 2026; August coverage ends on August 19, and earlier instruments were found less consistently. Historical totals therefore mix adoption and discovery. Of 457 eligible records, 147 retain source verification flags; date-precision and status counts appear on page S25 (Bommarito 2026).

Table S1. Policy sample construction

Rule	Records remaining
Raw inventory	533
Geographically mapped instruments	531
Month dated within panel	490
Explicit data center sector	466
Exclude pending status: primary	457

Note: The 24 sector exclusions and nine status exclusions are disjoint. Expired, replaced, and rescinded instruments can remain as historical adoptions. Primary records occur in 348 counties; 388 have dates in 2026, 58 in 2025, and 11 earlier.

S2. Project universe and announcement eligibility

The project file contains 2,165 clusters with assigned locations in 692 counties. Source records are combined under persistent cluster identifiers; a cluster can represent a campus or development phase rather than an independently verified parcel. The supplied date-precision field contains 573 day, 402 month, 257 year, 928 none, and five other entries. The universe includes 23 clusters flagged as campus-level and 57 flagged as having multiple rows within a source. These flags are retained as source information, not independently adjudicated errors. The cross-source universe also includes computing uses that require sector review; a name-based sensitivity screen identifies 43 possible cryptocurrency-related projects in the 872-project outcome sample.

County announcement eligibility is rebuilt using every project status, including cancellation. Project models exclude 27 county-unresolved records and one out-of-scope innovation center. A county is treated only when its first usable announcement month is in February 2017-August 2026 and no undated project or year-only date in the same or an earlier year can precede it. Counties containing no recorded project form the comparison group. An undated moratorium exclusion is applied subsequently to both groups, as shown on page S4.

Table S2. County classification before policy-date exclusions

Classification	Counties
Eligible first announcement month	271
No geographically assigned project	2,530
Uncertain earlier project timing	188
Project present but no usable month	183
First month before February 2017	50
Total county framework	3,222

Note: The labels describe the supplied project record. The observed-absence category contains 2,530 counties and can include unobserved proposals.

S2 continued. Investment history at policy adoption

For each county, classification uses the first eligible policy month. An announcement month at or before that month establishes project presence. A year-only announcement in an earlier year also establishes presence, while a year-only announcement in the policy year leaves order unresolved. An undated project makes timing uncertain unless another project already establishes prior presence. A county containing projects only with later dates enters the later-project category; a county with no cluster anywhere in the inventory enters the observed-absence category. Cancelled projects can establish prior presence under the same rules. The primary classification yields 121 counties with known prior or contemporaneous projects.

The comparison with the earlier draft is a diagnostic of coding choices. Using the original all-sector policy dates but restoring cancelled projects increases known prior presence from 104 to 126 counties. Subsequent sector and pending-status exclusions alter both the set of counties and their first eligible dates. The final categories must therefore be recomputed from eligible instruments rather than produced by subtracting a fixed number from the earlier total of 367.

Table S3. Classification under alternative policy eligibility

History at first policy	Primary	Include pending
Known prior or contemporaneous project	121	125
No geographically assigned project	193	195
Uncertain timing	28	29
Projects only later	6	6
Total counties	348	355

Note: The primary series contains 457 records; the inclusive series contains 466. The geographic unit in both columns is the county, with 348 in the primary series.

S3. First-adoption model and uncertainty

The risk set starts with 271 eligible announcement counties and 2,530 comparison counties. Removing 23 counties with any undated moratorium leaves 262 announcement counties and 2,516 comparison counties, totaling 2,778. The exclusion uses all undated policy records conservatively, including records outside the explicit-sector series. Each county contributes months from January 2017 through its first eligible adoption, inclusive, or through August 2026 if no eligible adoption is recorded. Multiple instruments in the same or later months do not create additional events. The primary panel contains 321,054 observations and 247 first-adoption events; the raw post-announcement cell contains 49 events in 3,905 county-months, and the remaining cell contains 198 in 317,149.

The baseline equation is $Y_{ct} = a_t + b \text{Post}_{ct} + e_{ct}$, estimated by ordinary least squares after calendar-month demeaning. Post equals one from the first eligible announcement onward. The timing model replaces Post with indicators for months 0-5, 6-11, and 12 onward. Alternatives replace a_t with state-by-month effects or add county effects. The two-way specification uses iterative demeaning to convergence. The regressions describe association within the first-adoption risk set defined on page S4.

For one-way models, the clustered covariance uses county score sums and the finite-sample factor $G/(G-1)$ times $(N-1)/(N-F-K)$, where G is the number of clusters, F the number of absorbed groups, and K the number of regressors. Intervals use the normal critical value 1.96. State clustering changes the grouping of scores; it does not account for arbitrary dependence across states. The specification and interpretation follow the event-history distinction between internal conditions and diffusion in Berry and Berry (1990).

S3 continued. Announcement estimates

Table S4 reports adjusted monthly adoption differences. Timing indicators enter one regression, with direct early-versus-later contrasts on page S25. The other rows are separate specifications. State-month and county effects address shared state shocks and stable county differences, respectively; neither removes endogenous disclosure or differential discovery. These comparisons do not identify a legal or economic deadline at 6 months.

Table S4. First recorded adoption, percentage points

Specification	Estimate	95% interval	N
Month effects	0.84	[0.48, 1.20]	321,054
Month effects; state clusters	0.84	[0.33, 1.35]	321,054
State-month effects	0.82	[0.47, 1.17]	321,054
County and month effects	1.03	[0.60, 1.46]	321,054
Omit August	0.89	[0.51, 1.26]	318,523
Months 0-5	1.75	[0.98, 2.51]	321,054
Months 6-11	0.30	[-0.25, 0.84]	321,054
Months 12 onward	0.38	[-0.04, 0.80]	321,054

Note: Primary series; 2,778 counties. State-clustered model has 51 observed state-level clusters. All other intervals are county clustered. The inclusive-status month-effect estimate is 0.91 pp [0.54, 1.28], from 321,047 observations and 252 events. The corresponding inclusive state-month estimate is 0.89 pp [0.53, 1.26].

S4. Construction status: estimand and coding

The outcome is construction status in the supplied 872-project snapshot. Exposure requires an eligible policy somewhere in the same county during announcement months g through $g+5$. Sector and status filtering reduces exposure from 100 to 94 projects, including 70 announced in 2026. Legal coverage remains unresolved, as detailed on pages S14-S15.

The model regresses Started on county-policy exposure, announcement-month effects, $\log(1+MW)$, and a missing-capacity indicator. Missing MW is represented by zero and the indicator; reported capacity can mix phases or measurement conventions. The original unfiltered coefficient is reproduced at -0.103706 and the corrected primary coefficient is -0.094635.

Project-model intervals use 999 county resampling attempts, seed 20260906, with weighted refitting of announcement-month effects. Rank-deficient draws are omitted; at least 90 percent must be valid. Every primary window estimate accepts all 999 draws. These percentile intervals quantify county-resampling uncertainty, leaving confounding and measurement error unresolved in the 872-project comparison.

Table S5. Construction sample checks

Quantity	Count
Project clusters	872
Counties	495
Primary early county exposure	94
Exposed and announced in 2026	70
Name-screened possible crypto projects	43

Note: The name screen is an exploratory sensitivity, not a validated industry classification. Excluding screened cases leaves 829 projects; see page S7.

S4 continued. Timing and sample sensitivities

Window changes and date shifts are separate diagnostics. A shift changes every eligible policy month by the stated number of months before recomputing exposure; announcement dates remain fixed. The six- and twelve-month follow-up rows require that many calendar-month intervals to end by July 2026, while measuring construction status in the supplied snapshot. The twelve-month sample has only seven exposed projects. Its large negative coefficient is retained rather than suppressed, but the small exposed group does not establish permanent prevention. Removing the Nebius cluster tests sensitivity to its verified municipal exemption; its coverage under other candidate instruments remains unresolved.

Table S6. Construction differences, percentage points

Specification	Estimate	95% interval	N
Primary: months 0-5	-9.46	[-18.39, 0.06]	872
Months 0-2	-6.47	[-17.89, 6.76]	872
Months 0-8	-6.03	[-14.65, 4.03]	872
Months 0-11	-1.86	[-11.02, 8.61]	872
Policy dates two months earlier	-6.59	[-16.85, 4.28]	872
Policy dates two months later	-10.56	[-19.62, 0.85]	872
Six-month follow-up through July	-10.79	[-23.79, 2.50]	630
Twelve-month follow-up through July	-43.33	[-66.73, -16.48]	430
Exclude possible crypto names	-8.94	[-18.57, 0.01]	829
Exclude six invalid cancellation records	-9.59	[-18.51, -0.23]	866
Omit Nebius project with city exemption	-10.48	[-19.73, -0.72]	871

Note: Announcement-month effects and capacity controls in every row. County-bootstrap percentile intervals; all 999 draws accepted. These are associations with county policy occurrence. The illustrative exemption removal leaves 871 county-matched projects.

S5. Fixed-horizon construction and missing dates

A twelve-month outcome covers g through $g+11$. The primary complete-month analysis requires that interval to end by July 2026, giving 430 projects. Known construction with no usable start month remains unknown for this outcome. Table S7 bounds raw group shares by assigning every missing start either outside or inside the interval. The bounds condition on recorded status and do not address confounding. The seven exposed projects contain no recorded start within twelve months, but that small group cannot represent the recent policy wave. The through-August comparison is explicitly a partial-endpoint sensitivity, not a completed-month sample.

Among the 430 projects, complete-date estimation retains 277 observations and yields -25.00 pp [-45.66, -0.48]; 999 of 999 bootstrap attempts are valid. Assigning all missing outcomes zero gives -21.14 pp [-40.00, -2.06], while assigning all one gives -38.96 pp [-61.70, -11.94]. These are selected-sample or assignment scenarios, not bounds on the regression coefficient. The earlier g through $g+12$ convention covers thirteen months; reproductions of that convention and the through-August twelve-month cases are retained in the diagnostic result files.

Table S7. Raw twelve-month construction bounds

Endpoint / exposure	N	Known starts	Unknown date	Share bounds
July / unexposed	423	77	153	18.2%-54.4%
July / exposed	7	0	0	0.0%-0.0%
August / unexposed	446	81	159	18.2%-53.8%
August / exposed	11	0	2	0.0%-18.2%

Note: August is incomplete in the policy source. Unknown-date entries are known starts whose month is missing. A known start before announcement does not count as a start within the interval. County-policy exposure is the same six-month definition as Table S6.

S5 continued. Monthly starts and cancellations

The monthly sample ends at the recorded start, recorded cancellation, or August 2026. Six records are excluded for incompatible or unsupported cancellation concepts: DCP00636, DCP01140, DCP01142, DCP00177, DCP00223, and DCP00492. Additional exclusions are 218 unknown start months, 22 starts preceding announcement, two unknown cancellation months, and two cancellations preceding announcement. The resulting 622 projects contribute 6,703 project-months in 408 counties, with 146 starts and 81 cancellations. Cancellation dates are inherited from the extended source file; the exact-date sensitivity retains 56 cancellation events.

Each cause-specific linear probability model absorbs months since announcement and calendar-year indicators. The policy variable becomes one after a previous eligible county adoption; it does not track whether that instrument remains in force. A same-month version permits contemporaneous policy and outcome. The same-month comparison permits a refusal to supply both the policy indicator and the cancellation outcome in Table S8.

Table S8. Association with previous county policy, pp per month

Outcome / specification	Estimate	95% interval	N
Start; lagged policy	-0.71	[-1.58, 0.53]	6,703
Cancellation; lagged policy	0.65	[-0.80, 1.88]	6,703
Start; exact cancellations only	-0.62	[-1.45, 0.66]	6,528
Cancellation; exact dates only	0.47	[-0.61, 1.71]	6,528
Start; omit cancellations	-0.66	[-1.59, 0.60]	6,105
Start; allow same-month policy	-0.92	[-1.71, 0.13]	6,703
Cancellation; allow same month	1.64	[0.32, 3.24]	6,703

Note: County-bootstrap 95% percentile intervals. Exact-cancellation sample: 597 projects, 396 counties, 56 cancellations. Excluding cancellations: 541 projects and 364 counties. The competing event ends observation, and the primary lagged sample contains 6,703 project-months.

S6. Diffusion measures and chronological ordering

The diffusion panel includes 3,184 counties without undated policy, 367,746 county-months, and 332 first adoptions. Observation stops at first adoption. County adjacency and organizer links are symmetrized. An organizer link is eligible only after the earliest month when a group is recorded in both counties. Recent exposure counts first adoptions in months $t-3$ through $t-1$, with each connected pair counted once. The strict ordering produces the exposed cells in Table S10.

The adjacent model splits recent neighboring adoption by shared eligible organization. The nonadjacent model adds organizational and shared-domain links outside the neighbor set. Both include own announcement presence, a timing-uncertainty indicator, and previous neighbor-adoption stock. All project statuses contribute to presence. Year-only dates enter in December with an uncertainty indicator in this broad panel; the first-announcement model retains the stricter rule on page S2.

State-by-calendar-month effects absorb the contemporaneous state environment. County- and state-clustered normal intervals are reported on page S11. The dated organizer layer originates in opposition documentation, so chronology does not remove shared ascertainment or organizational selection into conflict. Shared outlet domains represent a fixed directory-based relation, not a verified communication channel. The models describe conditional adoption associations; distinguishing political learning from learning about policy performance requires evidence of what officials acquired through their connections (Arnold et al. 2017; Gilardi 2010; Gilardi et al. 2021).

S6 continued. Diffusion estimates and exposed cells

Table S9 reports the principal network terms. Estimates are per additional prior adopter in the relevant connection category. Large adjacent-organizer coefficients depend on five outcome events, and normal approximations should be interpreted with that sparse support in view. State clustering changes uncertainty but does not establish independence of linked jurisdictions. The full result file also reports those controls and the unsplit neighboring-adoption coefficient for the 367,746 observations.

Table S9. Network association, percentage points

Term / clusters	Estimate	95% interval	N
Adjacent organizer / county	6.61	[-1.10, 14.32]	367,746
Other adjacent / county	0.73	[0.12, 1.35]	367,746
Nonadjacent organizer / county	1.34	[-0.23, 2.91]	367,746
Nonadjacent domain / county	0.36	[-1.29, 2.01]	367,746
Adjacent organizer / state	6.61	[-2.67, 15.89]	367,746
Nonadjacent organizer / state	1.34	[0.36, 2.31]	367,746

Note: Separate adjacent and nonadjacent specifications, defined on page S10. County clusters: 3,184; observed state-level clusters: 52. Intervals use a normal critical value of 1.96.

Table S10. Support for positive network exposure

Exposure	County-months	Adoptions
Adjacent organizer	48	5
Other adjacent	3,278	85
Nonadjacent organizer	169	12
Nonadjacent shared domain	203	4

Note: Cells overlap across categories. The smallest positive-exposure cell contains 48 county-months.

S7. Local outlet comparison and follow-up

The comparison uses month-eligible announcement counties, excludes undated policy, and removes first adoption before announcement. An outlet is present if the directory maps at least one to the county. The outcome covers announcement months g through $g+11$. Requiring those intervals to end by July leaves 118 counties, only twelve without an outlet. Through-August intervals include 128 counties but extend into incomplete policy collection, as distinguished in Table S11.

A qualifying adoption appears without a mapped outlet when August is included. Even with completed-month follow-up, zero events among twelve counties permits substantial underlying adoption probabilities. Directory presence does not establish reporting about the proposal or when residents learned of it. These comparisons cannot establish that physically local outlets are necessary for action (Snyder and Strömberg 2010).

Table S11. First adoption within twelve calendar months

Follow-up convention	Mapped outlet	Adopt / counties	Percent
Intervals end by July	Absent	0 / 12	0.0
Intervals end by July	Present	6 / 106	5.7
Intervals end by August	Absent	1 / 14	7.1
Intervals end by August	Present	9 / 114	7.9
All eligible; partial follow-up	Absent	1 / 27	3.7
All eligible; partial follow-up	Present	35 / 229	15.3

Note: Last two rows are descriptive counts with unequal follow-up and are not comparable twelve-month rates. Restoring cancelled projects affects eligibility and observed adoption. The completed-month comparison contains 118 counties.

S7 continued. Observation channels and interpretation

The supplied county-month file contains heterogeneous records whose totals differ from raw collection counts because of dates, geography, and the analysis window. Overlap has not been adjudicated into a common event denominator. A meeting, opposition action, news item, and policy instrument are not interchangeable observations. The combined 84 ACLED and Crowd Counting Consortium records cannot supply a denominator for the channels in Table S12.

Meetings can record debate without opposition, while policy can occur without protest. Outlet locations do not identify every jurisdiction discussed in an article. Opposition documentation also supplies organizer ties, linking network measurement to conflict ascertainment. The revised text removes claims of complete mobilization coverage while retaining meetings as a distinct institutional venue (Barari and Simko 2023).

Table S12. Records in the supplied county-month file

Channel	Mapped within-panel records
ACLED	23
Crowd Counting Consortium	61
Opposition tracker	1,448
Movement records	126
Local government meetings	2,426
Geographically assigned news	9,042
Unfiltered policy instruments	490

Note: Counts restrict contention_county_month.csv to January 2017-August 2026. All-date totals are 2,612 meetings and 1,449 tracker actions. The policy total precedes sector and status corrections; the main series contains 457 eligible instruments.

S8. Legal coverage: verified institutional examples

The City of Independence explains that its 180-day pause covers new data center and battery-storage applications and exempts projects already submitted, authorized, or approved. Its FAQ specifically excludes the Nebius project. The supplied project record DCP01307 appears in the original county-based early-exposure comparison. The municipal explanation therefore contradicts treating that city instrument as a binding restriction on that project; any other candidate instrument still requires separate authority and parcel checks. The source establishes an exemption, not the full project outcome (City of Independence 2026).

Birmingham provides an independent illustration of policy design. Its April 2026 District 8 newsletter reports the March 3 approval of a 180-day pause, with exemptions for projects already in the permitting process and facilities below 20 megawatts. It identifies the DC Blox expansion and Nebius AI Factory as exempt. The example is used to explain legal scope, not added as an exposed project observation or as evidence about the frequency of exemptions (City of Birmingham 2026, 3).

Sources: City of Independence, Data Center & BESS Moratorium FAQs, <https://www.independencemo.gov/community-faqs/data-center-bess-moratorium-faqs>, accessed September 6, 2026. City of Birmingham, District 8 Newsletter, April 2026, page 3, <https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/assets.birminghamal.gov/s3fs-public/2026-04/District%208%20Newsletter%204.2026.pdf>.

S8 continued. Project-instrument review and unresolved scope

The current review file enumerates 149 eligible project-instrument pairs for the 94 projects exposed under the primary six-month county rule. It preserves identifiers, county, announcement month, policy month, jurisdiction, legal description, affected-project text, and source status. Pairings comprise 63 city, 31 county, 31 township, 13 town, nine village, one utility-authority, and one other entry. The earlier file remains as historical documentation of 161 pairings for 99 projects; it should not be used as the current legal-review denominator.

The source descriptions identify additional candidate exemptions and jurisdiction mismatches requiring primary-document review. These include the named Powers Ferry development in Marietta and the Stratos project in Box Elder County. They are retained as review leads rather than promoted to verified exclusions. A complete legal match requires the adopting authority, territorial coverage, regulated use, operative dates, grandfathering language, and the project application or entitlement date. The machine-readable review file exposes the evidence needed for those decisions without asserting that they have been completed for all 94 projects.

County-only filtering cannot solve this problem: a county ordinance can govern unincorporated land while a project lies within a city. Likewise, treating the first recorded moratorium as permanently active ignores expiry, replacement, judicial action, and exemptions. The exposure measure records county policy occurrence; exposure labels in the tables refer to geographic coincidence, not verified legal coverage. Replacing it with binding project exposure requires the legal and parcel checks described on pages S14-S15.

S9. Reproducibility, validation, and output map

All six supplied analysis stages were rerun from copied frozen inputs. Shared numerical results match the saved outputs; one historical file adds bootstrap-count metadata without changing estimates. An independent implementation with explicit fixed-effect indicators also reproduces the main adoption coefficients and county standard errors. These checks validate computation conditional on the structured records; independent adjudication of source accuracy remains outstanding for the 457 eligible instruments.

Output map: `strict_policy_estimates.csv` contains announcement, construction-window, and diffusion estimates; `complete_month_estimates.csv` contains completed-month and source-concept sensitivities; `strict_diagnostic_estimates.csv` contains fixed-horizon and monthly outcome models. Restored estimates, cancellation ordering, event-time support, and source counts are in the expansion directory. The README specifies execution order and dependencies; each statistical result records sample size and uncertainty method. Historical outputs are preserved separately, with all 26 original SI tables available for inspection. The v2 verification package supplies the checks and figure data retained in v3, including current project-policy pairs and exposed-start chronology; page S25 reports the additional findings.

S9 continued. Scope of the completed revision

The revision corrects policy eligibility, cancelled-project histories, uncertain timing, first-adoption risk sets, organizer ordering, and the outcome comparisons documented on pages S1-S15. Further empirical work requires comprehensive ordinance validation, parcel coverage, entitlement dates, sector and phase reconciliation, and observation sufficient to distinguish delay from abandonment or relocation. The selected official-source examples do not complete those checks for the 94 exposed projects.

OpenAI Codex, using GPT-6 for this pass, assisted in September 2026 with literature checks, substantive and language editing, analysis code and execution, regression tables, statistical figure generation, and Word tracked changes. The author directed the revision; author review of the revised prose and results remains pending. Earlier AI use must be included in the consolidated submission disclosure and questionnaire (American Journal of Political Science 2026).

American Journal of Political Science. 2026. "AI Accountability and Transparency Policy for Authors." Updated August 11. <https://ajps.org/ajps-ai-policy/>.

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S10. Source construction and validation

The project crosswalk preserves 3,640 source rows in 2,884 initial clusters. The documented matching stages use shared registry identifiers; operator and site codes; same-operator coordinates within one kilometer; unique operator-city or operator-county pairs; name similarity; shared name tokens; and recorded manual adjudications. Conflicting site codes prohibit automatic links. Initial clusters include 2,355 single-source and 529 multi-source cases. These rules improve traceability but do not independently validate identity, particularly for campuses, phases, and approximate coordinates. The analytic universe has 2,165 clusters; the retained crosswalk and universe files expose each membership decision.

The original 100-record tracker check is restored because organizer measurement depends on it. Counts below are recomputed from the supplied coded sample, whose protocol used language-model coders and source excerpts. They are agreement with available cited material, not independent human validation. Date agreement includes month support for a first-of-month record; partial agreement means year support. Only seven group fields agree fully, while 32 lack support in the fetched source and 49 are empty. The limited support for group identification qualifies the network estimates in Table S9.

Table S13. Source agreement in the original 100-record check

Field	Agree / partial	Disagree	Unsupported / empty / no source
Place	92 / 5	0	1 / 0 / 2
Action	68 / 23	5	2 / 0 / 2
Date	44 / 37	8	9 / 0 / 2
Outcome	58 / 27	0	13 / 0 / 2
Groups	7 / 10	0	32 / 49 / 2

Note: Every row sums to 100. Unsupported refers to the fetched source, not proof that the event or group did not exist. Original seed: 20260826; 3 sampled records date to 2024, 22 to 2025, and 75 to 2026.

S10 continued. Prior opposition and project outcomes

The primary six-month county exposure is split by whether the tracker, movement source, Crowd Counting Consortium, or ACLED records an action before the county's first eligible policy month. Both exposure indicators enter one model against the same 778 unexposed projects, with announcement-month effects and capacity controls. The prior-opposition group contains 58 projects in 43 counties, with 14 starts and eleven cancellations; the no-recorded-prior group contains 36 projects in 32 counties, with one start and ten cancellations. These classifications describe recorded activity in the four sources used for Table S14.

The construction contrast does not support attributing the pooled shortfall to documented mobilization. It can reflect administrative restrictions, undocumented activity, or project selection. The contrast is estimated directly by reparameterizing the joint model; its interval does not follow from comparing separate significance levels. Each model uses 999 valid county bootstrap draws, seed 20260906. Cancellation contrasts remain associations because chronology can reverse the proposed direction, as shown on page S22.

Table S14. Exposure split and direct contrasts, pp

Outcome and exposure	Difference	95% interval
Start / prior opposition	-2.43	[-13.85, 10.16]
Start / no prior recorded	-20.97	[-29.72, -11.20]
Start / prior minus no prior	18.53	[4.80, 32.40]
Cancellation / prior	7.31	[-2.91, 19.54]
Cancellation / no prior	15.22	[1.14, 30.43]
Cancellation / contrast	-7.91	[-24.99, 9.40]

Note: N = 872 projects, 495 county clusters. Capacity terms remain in each regression. The cancellation outcome retains the snapshot definition to expose its interpretive limits; the six incompatible records are excluded in the separate monthly models on page S9.

S10 continued. Cancellation chronology and rival mechanisms

Of the 94 exposed projects, 21 have a cancellation record. Recomputing the first eligible county policy inside each project's six-month window places policy before the assigned cancellation month in eight cases, in the same month in six, and after it in seven. Fourteen dates are treated as exact to the available month in the source coding: five before, five same-month, and four after. Seven are reporting-based upper bounds: three before, one same-month, and three after. A policy preceding a reporting bound need not precede the actual cancellation. Daily ordering remains unresolved in the 6 month-tied cases.

The earlier adopter-type split is not restored as a hypothesis test: its responsive category excluded cancelled projects and therefore sorted observations partly by their eventual outcome. The following matrix retains the theoretical alternatives while identifying their evidentiary status. The corresponding cancellation models remain descriptive in Tables S8 and S14.

Table S15. Mechanisms and discriminating evidence

Account	Required observation	Present evidentiary status
Mobilization	Action precedes and changes a covered decision	Prior-action split retained; influence unidentified
Administrative preparation	Rule gap, pause, completed standards	Adoption observed; later standards unmeasured
Project distress	Financing or withdrawal precedes restriction	Some cancellation ordering reverses
Information transmission	Recorded exchange before local decision	Prior ties observed; exchange unobserved
Selective documentation	Stable discovery and validation across places	Source discovery varies strongly over time
Site substitution / preemption	Alternative sites or changes in operative authority	Neither causal mechanism estimated

Note: Several accounts can coexist. A common county, a small p-value, or a later construction status cannot supply the missing observation.

S10 continued. Pre-announcement evidence and support

The table restores anticipation diagnostics using first eligible policy events and the corrected announcement counties. A county contributes only while at risk, and only when its relative month lies within January 2017-August 2026. These raw counts have changing cohort composition and calendar exposure; they are not adjusted event-study coefficients or a causal placebo test. The complete minus-24 to plus-24 series is supplied as a result file. The earlier policy event study used instrument counts, despite its first-adoption label, so its plotted coefficients remain historical outputs in original Table B1.

Among 225 eligible announcement counties with at least one outlet domain mapped to that county alone, 39 have contention-related news in the previous 24 months; the earliest such item has a median lead of 10 months. County attribution does not prove that coverage concerns the project defining announcement. The source-based lead calculation establishes earlier county-level public contention in 39 cases; first knowledge of the particular development remains undated.

Table S16. First policy events around announcement

Relative months	County-months at risk	First events
-24 to -13	3,140	1
-12 to -3	2,610	1
-2 to -1	518	4
0 to 5	1,368	30
6 to 11	854	6
12 to 24	1,003	7

Note: Intervals differ in length and cohort support. The full risk-set models remain in Table S4. News leads use the recorded contention query and directory mapping, without the earlier draft's claim that every item predates the firm's first public disclosure.

S10 continued. Remaining records and analytical limits

The meeting source contains 2,832 matched videos, 2,793 assigned geographically and 2,612 with both county and meeting date. Of these, 2,426 fall inside the panel. The 181 assigned videos without meeting dates have upload timestamps, but only 175 uploads lie within the panel. The original upload-date variant and all monthly coefficients remain in the historical-results archive; upload is an upper bound on the meeting date. The source term scan reports secrecy-related language in 102 meetings across 54 jurisdiction codes and a separate checked list of 18 data center code names. The 102 meetings provide contextual traces; intentional suppression and the causal effect of confidentiality remain unestablished.

The state file contains 438 bills, one executive order, and one gubernatorial directive. Last action occurs in 2025 or 2026 for 401 records, but this is neither an enactment count nor a measure of preemption. County covariates remain available with vintage fields for population, income, rurality, election returns, establishments, and permit-only stock. They characterize the original comparisons; the revised primary models do not use the old outlet-siting regression to reject environmental injustice. Missing establishment values remain unresolved in the supplied County Business Patterns fields.

Historical outputs are retained for the original 26 analytical SI tables, including cohort subsets, state omissions, alternative network definitions, meeting models, code names, and verification statements. They are explicitly separated from corrected estimates. The cut assessment maps each table to retained content, a corrected replacement, or an explained exclusion. Reproducing an old coefficient confirms its computation under old rules; it does not validate its estimand, sources, or claim. The expanded package preserves both the corrected results and the historical evidence behind all 26 original tables.

S11. Additional verification and sensitivity checks

Among 457 eligible instruments, source dates are labeled exact for 404, unverified for 28, month-only for 13, and a range for 12; 147 retain verification tags. Statuses are active 364, extended 39, replaced 30, expired 19, and rescinded five. These labels describe the source, not independent legal validation. Finding omitted projects in 19 of 193 observed-absence counties would reduce that category to 174 of 348, exactly half.

Of 15 exposed construction starts, 12 lack a month; two dated starts precede the first policy inside the exposure window and one follows it. The May-July check retains the original first-adoption risk rule but restricts estimation months. Its coefficient and the exploratory timing contrasts below use county-clustered normal intervals; uncertainty is unadjusted for multiple comparisons. The May-July sample contains 147 first adoptions in 2,678 counties.

Table S17. Additional adoption diagnostics, percentage points

Comparison	Estimate	95% interval	N
Months 0-5 minus 6-11	1.45	[0.50, 2.40]	321,054
Months 0-5 minus 12+	1.36	[0.49, 2.24]	321,054
Post announcement; May-July 2026	2.19	[0.66, 3.71]	7,885

Note: Contrasts use the timing-bin model in Table 3; the May-July regression has month effects. The latter changes calendar support and cannot recover missed earlier adoptions. Statistical uncertainty excludes source misclassification; all diagnostics are exploratory.