

# Data Centers Become Flashpoint Issue as State Leaders Visit Polk County

*Watchdogs of Fort Meade urge public turnout at May 7 press conferences and continued action on environmental review.*

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*Watchdog organizers*

FORT MEADE, FL – May 7, 2026 – As the debate over large-scale AI data centers intensifies across Florida, the issue is quickly becoming a defining moment for state leadership and a critical concern for communities like Fort Meade.

The Watchdogs of Fort Meade are calling on members of the public and concerned citizens across Polk County to attend two upcoming press conferences on Thursday, May

7, where Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Lt. Governor Jay Collins are expected to address data center policy and legislation.

These events come as the Watchdogs of Fort Meade are actively pursuing an environmental review and compliance investigation through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection regarding the proposed development.

As the conversation expands beyond Fort Meade, data center development is increasingly becoming part of broader statewide discussions. Public officials and candidates have begun outlining their positions on AI infrastructure and growth.

While it is unknown exactly how current Florida Lieutenant Governor Jay Collins plans to move forward regarding AI data centers, it has been made clear that congressman Byron Donalds, another 2026 gubernatorial candidate, has publicly expressed support for large-scale AI development initiatives and has received financial backing from organizations aligned with expanding artificial intelligence infrastructure.

Watchdogs of Fort Meade note that public engagement at this stage is imperative and are encouraging all members of the public, neighbors, and concerned citizens to attend one or both press conferences on May 7 and to consider signing a request to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for an environmental review and compliance investigation on the Stonebridge development of the hyperscale data center in Fort Meade. Hundreds of residents

have already signed letters requesting further review, and organizers are encouraging continued participation to maintain momentum. This coordinated effort is intended to push back against the proposed development and ensure that environmental risks, regulatory concerns, and potential impacts to the community are fully scrutinized before irreversible decisions are made.

“This is a moment for people to show up, listen, and make it clear that the future of their communities matter,” Watchdog organizers said.

To print and sign a request, please visit [Watchdogs of Fort Meade Facebook page](#). Emailed copies of the letter can be sent to [Public.Services@FloridaDEP.gov](mailto:Public.Services@FloridaDEP.gov); physical letters can be mailed to:

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Public Services  
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

In addition, individuals can visit <https://brockovichdatacenter.com/> to view a map of major AI data centers in the U.S. that are either operational or under construction. Community members can also report key concerns regarding AI data centers in their backyard.

RSVP for Upcoming Press Conferences – May 7, 2026

Lt. Governor Jay Collins – AI & Data Centers Press Conference

- Arrival: 12:30 PM | Start: 1:00 PM
- Location: Cleveland Heights Golf Course, Sawgrass Room, 2900 Buckingham Ave  
Lakeland, FL 33803
- RSVP: <https://mailchi.mp/jayforflorida/rsvp-polk-county-press-conference-may-7>

\*The press conference for Lt. Governor Jay Collins was originally scheduled to be at the Fort Meade Community Center, but on Monday, May 6, the Fort Meade City Commission communicated to Collins that he could no longer hold the conference at that location. The press conference is now at the Cleveland Heights Golf Course (address above). It is believed that Fort Meade City Commission is limiting freedom of speech and opportunity as it relates to this project due to their recently approved plans to move forward with a data center in Fort Meade.

Governor Ron DeSantis – Data Centers Bill Signing (SB 484)

- Arrival: 3:30 PM | Start: 4:00 PM
- Location: Barnett Applied Research Center (BARC), Florida Polytechnic University  
4400 Polytechnic Circle, Lakeland, FL
- RSVP: Kat Gates-Skipper – (863) 207-4200

For more information about the Watchdogs of Fort Meade, visit the following:

- [Petition: https://www.change.org/p/opposition-to-the-fm-florida-data-center](https://www.change.org/p/opposition-to-the-fm-florida-data-center)
- [Watchdogs of Fort Meade Website: https://watchdogsoffortmeade.com](https://watchdogsoffortmeade.com)
- Watchdogs of Fort Meade Facebook page: Watchdogs of Fort Meade (formerly: Concerning the Fort Meade Data Center)

For media inquiries, please contact Raul Alfonso, chair of Watchdogs of Fort Meade at [watchdogsoffortmeade@gmail.com](mailto:watchdogsoffortmeade@gmail.com).

Raul Alfonso

Watchdogs of Fort Meade

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