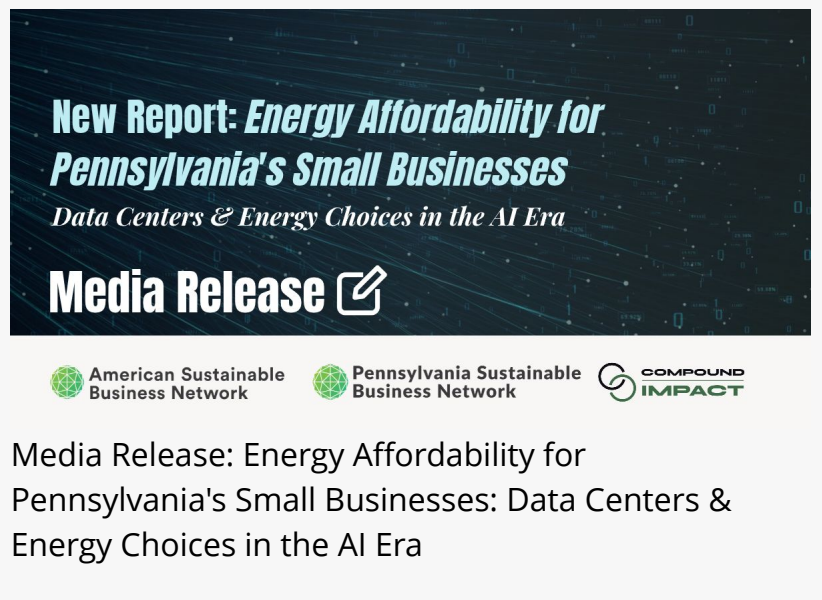


Who Pays for the AI Boom? New Report Finds Pennsylvania Small Businesses Are Footing the Bill for Data Center Growth

"Energy Affordability for Pennsylvania's Small Businesses" finds ratepayers cover 95% of data center grid connections, and lays out the tools to change that

PITTSBURGH, PA, UNITED STATES, August 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Pennsylvania households and businesses are now paying \$78.3 million more per month for electricity, nearly \$1 billion a year, driven in large part by the infrastructure costs of the state's rapidly expanding data center industry, according to a new report released today.



New Report: *Energy Affordability for Pennsylvania's Small Businesses*
Data Centers & Energy Choices in the AI Era

Media Release 

 American Sustainable Business Network  Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network  COMPOUND IMPACT

Media Release: Energy Affordability for Pennsylvania's Small Businesses: Data Centers & Energy Choices in the AI Era

"Energy Affordability for Pennsylvania's Small Businesses: Data Centers & Energy Choices in the AI Era," produced by the Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network (PASBN), the American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN) and Compound Impact Collective, examines how the state's small and medium-sized businesses are absorbing the cost of grid expansion driven by AI infrastructure, and what policymakers can do about it.

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Jorge Luis Fontanez, Founder, Compound Impact Collective

The report's findings include:

- Capacity market prices within the PJM Interconnection, the regional grid serving Pennsylvania, rose 833 percent for the 2025-2026 delivery year, with data centers accounting for roughly 63 percent of that increase.
- Under current cost-allocation rules, ratepayers paid for about 95 percent of data center grid connections — 124 of 130 projects in the PJM region in 2024 — rather than the

data centers that triggered them, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists.

- Pennsylvania business electricity bills are projected to rise by up to 29 percent due to the PJM surge.
- Nearly a quarter of Pennsylvanians could not afford their energy bill at least once in 2025.
- Rural and agricultural counties are seeing some of the steepest rate increases statewide, with Tioga County's electricity prices up 58 percent within the year.

"What we're seeing in Pennsylvania raises deep concerns about the economic and environmental impacts of data centers on small businesses and their communities, both here and across the country," said David Levine, ASBN Co-Founder & President. "We ask that legislators and decision-makers ensure small businesses and other stakeholders have a seat at the table to help guide responsible decisions about meeting our technology and energy needs."

"This report, which we hope sparks a broader discussion about small businesses and energy affordability, shows that there are policies that states and localities can adopt to support responsible AI data center development," said Michael Jarrett, former Deputy Director at Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network and report lead researcher. "Small businesses need affordable energy to remain competitive in their communities. The analysis identifies strategies that promote development while protecting small businesses from energy cost surges and environmental concerns frequently associated with data centers."

Rather than the moratoriums other states are adopting, the report points to Pennsylvania's model of negotiated partnership, including the nation's first publicly documented data center community benefit agreement, as a better path.

"Small businesses were never asked to finance the AI economy. Yet they are already underwriting it in Pennsylvania, oftentimes without their consent or knowledge," said Jorge Luis Fontanez, Compound Impact Collective's Founder. "My home state has better tools than almost any state in the country to change that. A legislative mandate paired with intentional stakeholder engagement and transparency will enable small businesses to negotiate as equals."

The report identifies where Pennsylvania has tools other states lack, including the state's Office of Small Business Advocate and a model community benefit agreement for data center accountability, clean energy and economic development opportunities. Pennsylvania lawmakers have advanced a legislative pipeline with bipartisan support that includes House Bill 1834 and House Bill 2650 to regulate data centers and protect ratepayers. The report's recommendations offer policymakers guidance on mandating transparency, ensuring community input on standards, and developing structures for ongoing participation and oversight by ratepayers, including small business owners.

[Read the full report.](#)

Members of the press may request a copy of the full report by contacting Anayana White at anayana@asbnetwork.org.

[Join the conversation:](#)

PASBN, ASBN, and Compound Impact Collective will host a public webinar, "Who Pays for the AI Boom? Inside Energy Affordability for Pennsylvania's Small Businesses," on Wednesday, August 26, 2026 at 1 PM ET, featuring the report's lead researcher and additional speakers. Details and registration: <https://asbnetwork.org/event/aiboom/>

About

American Sustainable Business Network

American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN) amplifies the collective voice of sustainable business to lead the way to a regenerative economy that is stakeholder-driven, just, and prosperous. With its members and state affiliates, ASBN's network collectively represents 200,000+ businesses. Learn more at asbnetwork.org

Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network

Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network (PASBN) unites businesses, policymakers, and community leaders across the state to advance a more just and equitable economy for all Pennsylvanians. As a state affiliate of ASBN, PASBN's work is organized around advocacy and engagement, partnerships and action, thought leadership, and strategic communications.

Compound Impact Collective

Compound Impact Collective is an independent research initiative investigating the climate, capital, and community decisions surrounding AI infrastructure and economic development. Learn more at www.compoundimpactcollective.com.

Heinz Endowments

The Heinz Endowments works to grow an exemplary, sustainable Pittsburgh region where everyone prospers and belongs. The Heinz Endowments provided financial support for this work but did not control its research, analysis, or conclusions.

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