Northern Virginia Chamber

Testimony of Clayton Medford, Senior Vice President
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

Oppose Data Center Development Moratorium

14I. Response to Board Motion to Cease Processing Data Center Applications

> ***A moratorium does not solve any of the economic challenges our region is facing. It would not restore federal jobs or contracts. It would not make Northern Virginia more competitive. It would instead put our economic reputation at risk at exactly the moment when we need to be working together to restore confidence among business leaders and proactively demonstrate that this is a place where businesses can thrive and grow and create jobs.***

Thank you, Madam Chair and Members of the Board.

My name is Clayton Medford, and I am here today on behalf of the members of the Northern Virginia Chamber who represent a broad cross-section of our regional economy. I urge you to reject the proposed moratorium on data center development. To be clear, Loudoun County can and should continue your work to improve land use standards, protect residential neighborhoods, require meaningful mitigation, and plan responsibly for energy and infrastructure. But a blanket pause would send the wrong message at the wrong time, and not only to data centers, but to every employer, investor, contractor, and entrepreneur considering a future in Loudoun County and in Northern Virginia.

This message to business leaders is especially important now. Northern Virginia is already experiencing economic stress from federal workforce reductions, federal contracting changes, and the broader effects of the Trump Administration's DOGE-driven restructuring. The University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center found that since the beginning of 2025 projected to the end of 2026, Virginia will lose over 75,000 jobs. Professional services, a sector closely tied to federal contracting and one of Virginia's largest private-sector employers, lost 9,500 jobs in the first half of this year alone.

In this environment, facing economic pressures from Washington, D.C., no locality in our region should join the federal government to weaken our regional economy by choosing to impose another barrier to investment, construction activity, and private-sector opportunity.

The direct impact of a moratorium is clear, and we have long had data that shows it. The 2024 JLARC report found that Virginia's data-center industry supports approximately 74,000 jobs annually, $5.5 billion in labor income, and $9.1 billion in state GDP. Most of those benefits arise during construction, supporting electricians, pipefitters, HVAC technicians, equipment operators, engineers, suppliers, restaurants, and small businesses throughout Northern Virginia and across the Commonwealth.

These are not abstract numbers. Data center construction is a major source of high-wage, career-building work for skilled trades. JLARC found that a typical data-center project can have roughly 1,500 workers on-site at the peak of construction. The industry's growth has expanded apprenticeship opportunities, including an electrical-workers program in Northern Virginia that has grown to 500 apprentices per training class. These are well-paying, high-demand jobs being created at a time when we are shedding job opportunities in other sectors.

The indirect impact may prove to be even more important, and we have recent actions in Richmond to support this. During the General Assembly session earlier this year, discussion of potential tax expansions led to national news and the questioning of Virginia's business friendly reputation. Business leaders felt as though government was completely disconnected from business and taking our economic prosperity for granted. The months-long battle over the budget, centered on the 11th hour repeal of the data center sales tax exemption, sent an even clearer message: Virginia government is not a reliable business partner. Even though none of the major tax proposals succeeded, and the sales tax exemption remains in place, the damage to our reputation is done and will take all of us working together to restore it.

The indirect impact will be hard to quantify. A CEO choosing to place 35 new jobs at their North Carolina office instead of in Ashburn will not show up on any report. But over time, the numbers will reflect the lost opportunities for Northern Virginia residents, as they are forced to look outside the region and outside Virginia for work.

A moratorium does not solve any of the economic challenges our region is facing. It would not restore federal jobs or contracts. It would not make Northern Virginia more competitive. It would instead put our economic reputation at risk at exactly the moment when we need to be working together to restore confidence among business leaders and proactively demonstrate that this is a place where businesses can thrive and grow and create jobs.

Please reject a broad moratorium. Continue improving the rules, demanding accountability from applicants, protecting residents, and ensuring infrastructure keeps pace. But do not close the door on investment and opportunity when our residents, workers, and business community need them the most.