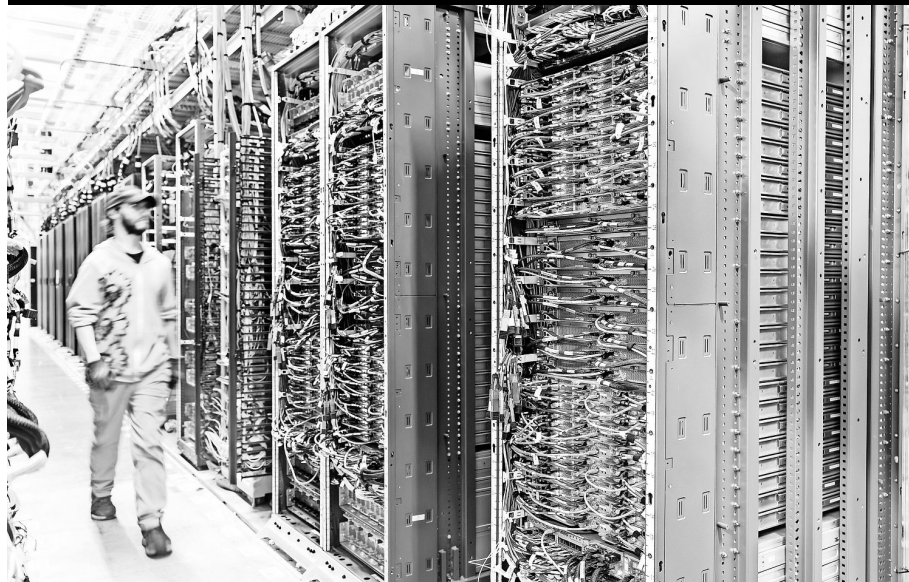


OPINIONS

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COMING SUNDAY

Kearny's looming massive water cuts are a warning to all of Arizona.



Inside an Amazon Web Services data center featuring liquid cooling technology. AWS launched in 2002 and now holds roughly a third of the global cloud market. PROVIDED BY AMAZON/PHOTO BY NOAH BERGER

Arizona can lead nation with sustainable data centers

Your Turn

Steve Zyglis and Kelly Trombley
Guest columnists

Arizona's data center revolution is here to stay. Managing rapid growth without careful planning, however, may strain the power grid and fail to deliver community benefits. Coordination among developers, utilities, policymakers and communities will ensure data centers serve as economic enablers that bring new jobs and unlock affordable power.

A new report from Gov. Katie Hobbs' Energy Promise Taskforce lays a path for the state to power data centers with affordable, clean energy and to plan in a way that modernizes the power grid and builds community trust for decades to come. Stakeholders should work together to implement this vision to keep Arizona at the forefront of the U.S. innovation economy.

Data centers are now core infrastructure and the cloud-based computing they enable is central to daily life. But they have large power needs that may increase pressure on our state's grid. State policymakers and businesses have

an urgent opportunity to ensure this record-breaking investment delivers community benefits while driving more efficient grid outlay and a more resilient energy system.

How can Arizona data centers ease neighborhood concerns?

The task force report demonstrates how Arizona can do that by focusing on integration and resilience rather than opposition. After all, more frequent extreme weather combined with the rapid growth in power demand from AI, advanced manufacturing and electrification of our cars, homes and buildings is highlighting our grid's weaknesses. Encouraging responsible and innovative investments in our energy system is necessary for our 21st century economy.

Importantly, the report offers a framework for community engagement on energy and data center projects to ensure sustainable development so residents aren't bearing the costs of development and power grid upgrades.

The task force also rightly recognizes that

clean energy like solar, wind and geothermal and battery storage are often the fastest and cheapest ways to meet this new power demand. Arizona's deployment of wind and solar power has more than tripled in the past decade, including a record amount of solar capacity installed in 2025.

The strategic energy report outlines thoughtful ways to get those sources onto the grid even more quickly so data centers can take advantage of new clean power. Using grid-enhancing technologies to expand capacity without adding power lines can make those upgrades cheaper and help bring clean power online quickly.

How does policy impact data center integration?

To ensure the AI buildup and Arizona's clean energy revolution go hand in hand, policy alignment matters. Data centers, battery factories and clean energy projects are part of the

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Mail your ballot early so your vote counts

Your Turn

Mary Jo Pitzl
Guest columnist

I cast my ballots for the April 7 Salt River Project elections. It didn't go well for me, but here's what that might mean for the upcoming primary and general elections this year.

I mailed my SRP ballots in late March. On April 9, I got a letter from SRP that included my two ballot envelopes and notification that I had failed to sign the affidavit on my ballot envelopes. But not to worry. If I signed them and mailed them back by 7 p.m. April 7, or took them to an SRP Vote Center, my votes would be counted.

Did you notice the timeline there? I got this notice TWO DAYS after the election had ended. It was my fault the envelopes weren't signed (rather embarrassing, I admit) but what caused the breakdown in getting me timely notice about my oversight? After all, the notification letter was dated April 1 - alas, no postmark on the envelope - yet it took eight days to reach my central Phoenix address.

The staffer at SRP's Elections Information Line blamed the U.S. Postal Service, observing things had been moving slowly there.



Voters line up at Salt River Project headquarters in Tempe on April 7, to vote in the power and water utility's elections. KATHY TULIMELLO/THE REPUBLIC

How can you ensure your ballot is counted?

There are some lessons to be learned from my experience.

- Don't freak out about a mail slow-

down when it comes to our upcoming midterm elections. Yes, the mail is moving slowly in many cases as USPS grapples with cost cutting. But mailing ballots early is standard advice from the folks who run our local, state and federal

elections. They now advise a deadline for a full week before Election Day.

- Don't stress out about a post-election message that there's an issue with your primary or general election ballot. There is time to fix errors such as forgetting to sign your ballot envelope. County recorders catch these errors (as did the SRP election folks), but they don't just rely on snail mail to contact the voter. They call or text the voter to remind them to come in and cure things like missing or questionable signatures. Heck, candidates would also be tracking down these ballots, as "ballot chasing" has become a baked-in part of the election process.

If you're mailing in a ballot to SRP in future elections, do it early - just in case there are glitches like mine.

Better yet, drop it off at their vote centers.

Or even better yet, ask why this utility, founded at the dawn of the 20th century, doesn't modernize to 21st century standards. Maybe the newly constituted SRP boards and councils would consider tackling this issue before the next elections roll around in 2028.

Mary Jo Pitzl is a former Arizona Republic reporter and central Phoenix resident whose home is in historic SRP territory.