



May 30, 2025

Louisiana Response to Senator Whitehouse on Meta's Louisiana Data Center

Dear Senator Whitehouse,

I was disappointed to receive a copy of your letter criticizing Meta's significant economic development project in Louisiana.

Meta's \$10 billion AI data center in Richland Parish is not just a tech project—it's a lifeline for one of the most persistently poor regions in the United States. Northeast Louisiana lies within the Mississippi Delta, an expanse of agricultural flatland that has endured generations of entrenched poverty. Jobs are scarce. Schools struggle for funding. Tens of thousands of families rely on government support for food and healthcare. In Richland Parish, the poverty rate exceeds 25%, and in neighboring East Carroll Parish, it's over 35%—among the highest in the nation.

Against this backdrop, Meta's investment offers transformational potential: construction jobs, long-term careers in tech, increased tax revenue, and the infrastructure to attract further development in a region too often left behind.

Efforts to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy are essential—but too often, the Democratic Party's blanket crusade against oil and gas overlooks economic realities and imposes disproportionate burdens on the very communities that progressives claim to champion.

Phasing down emissions is a critical goal, but insisting on an immediate end to natural gas usage is both impractical and unjust. Millions of Americans—especially in rural and historically marginalized regions like northeast Louisiana—still depend on affordable, reliable energy from natural gas. Sudden restrictions drive up energy costs, strain already fragile power grids, and threaten jobs in communities where economic opportunity is scarce.

Criticism of the project's reliance on natural gas ignores this reality. Our nation's growing energy needs, especially from AI and cloud computing, cannot be met with policies that turn their back on abundant and low-carbon natural gas. Solar and wind are vital, but today they lack the capacity and reliability to support 24/7 operations at this scale. Natural gas is the practical bridge, especially in states like Louisiana where renewable infrastructure is still scaling up.

Louisiana is emerging as a national leader in lower carbon innovation and investment. Over the past four years, the state has publicly announced more than **\$70 billion in low-carbon energy projects** that are expected to create more than **10,000 new jobs**, according to Louisiana Economic Development.

This wave of investment underscores Louisiana's unique advantage: a world-class industrial base, skilled workforce, supportive policy environment, and geology well-suited for permanent CO₂ storage. From blue hydrogen and ammonia production to direct air capture and renewable fuels, Louisiana is showing that meaningful emissions reductions and economic growth can go hand in hand.

Meta's data center will enable up to 1,500 MW of new renewables and could integrate CCUS at the supporting gas plants—exactly the kind of responsible, transitional energy development we need. Louisiana is proving that economic growth and climate action can go hand in hand.

Turning our backs on regions like northeast Louisiana in the name of rigid ideology isn't climate leadership, it's a missed opportunity to build a just and inclusive energy future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mary Landrieu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Landrieu".

Mary Landrieu
Former U.S. Senator
D-Louisiana