

JOINT POLICY COMMITTEE  
SB 2406 -- IN FAVOR

**CHAIRMEN KLEIN AND RUBY, AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

My name is Cecile Wehrman, executive director of the North Dakota Newspaper Association (NDNA). I provide this letter **IN FAVOR** of SB 2406.

SB 2406 will protect transparency around development of data centers and other industrial projects, to the benefit of citizens who will have to live with them in their neighborhoods for many years to come.

Of course newspapers prefer as much sunshine on government actions as possible, but we also note this bill does not intend to usurp existing exemptions in the economic development realm and should be adequate protection against the release of truly proprietary information.

This is a new technology and a new scale of development than North Dakota has seen in the past. These are not just buildings that sit near communities, but facilities that change the complexion of communities and create burdens on community resources and residents. Citizens, therefore, should be apprised of the potential for such community-altering developments to impact their lives.

As with any economic development project, if it's a good deal for the community, the promoters should have nothing to hide.

When looking at the advent of AI, and the data centers that power them, I can only imagine what voters would have chosen at the advent of Facebook if they'd known social media would harm children, disrupt industries, and spread disinformation. Given that North Dakota officials at all levels of government have a great deal more to learn about the pros and cons of data centers, providing extra transparency to the public at this time (and until July 2027) is a prudent protection.

