

Senate committee signs off on data center bills

Posted on Monday, Mar 16, 2026

Two bills regulating data centers passed out of a Senate committee Friday ahead of the final Senate floor period of the year.

AB 840, which promises ratepayers protections from data center development costs, passed the Assembly largely along party lines in January.

Democrats fought for legislation with a defined regulatory framework for the Public Service Commission to enforce rate controls and against a provision in the GOP-authored AB 840 restricting the development of new renewable energy resources tied to the data center.

The Committee on Utilities, Technology and Tourism's two Democrats, Sen. Melissa Ratcliff of Cottage Grove and Sen. Jeff Smith of Brunswick, voted against the bill.

Ratcliff cited Dem concerns about the bill's renewable energy language and efficacy at controlling rates in a statement to WisPolitics.

Senate co-sponsor Sen. Romaine Quinn, R-Birchwood, criticized Democrats for holding out over the bill's renewable energy provision, saying the opposing party was more interested in proliferating solar projects on Wisconsin farmland than passing data center regulation.

"I find it crazy they don't want to have data center regulation at all because of that one provision," Quinn said.

He said he was in ongoing discussions with his caucus so the bill would have enough votes to pass next week, but was "confident we'll get there with Republican support."

"At the end of the day, the public expects us to pass safeguards, and I don't know why it wouldn't pass without bipartisan support," Quinn said.

Also passing the committee was SB 969, which would prohibit data center

developers from using non-disclosure agreements to hide information about such a facility from the public.

“This legislation simply ensures that projects seeking local approval do so in the open so that we know what we are signing up for before we put pen to paper, not after,” bill co-sponsor Sen. Andre Jacque, R-New Franken, said in a statement. “If a project is good for the community, it should be able to survive a little daylight.”

His Assembly co-sponsor, Rep. Clint Moses, R-Menomonie, wrote in a text message that it was “great to see” the bill pass committee, “but also expected.”

Since the Assembly adjourned without passing the NDA bill’s counterpart in that chamber, the path forward for that bill is unclear.

Ratcliff was the sole nay vote on SB 969. In a statement, she wrote the bill “hinders local officials from accessing information they need to negotiate benefits for their communities” and “punishes local units of government before a productive conversation can even begin.”

The committee also passed:

- Along party lines AB 892, exempting crypto staking from Wisconsin’s definition of a security to allow for the purchase or sale of the service; and
- Unanimously AB 975, regulating and placing transaction limits on virtual currency kiosks.