



Agriculture Commissioner candidate Clayton Tucker speaks at a rally against data center development across the state on the Capitol grounds in Austin on July 27, 2026. (The Texas Tribune/Kaylee Greenlee)

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July 30, 2026

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When Matt Long stood before the Granbury, Texas, city council zoning meeting back in April to oppose the influx of proposed data centers in Hood County, he likened them to a spiritual abomination.

"I'd consider us a Christian city inside a Christian county," said Long, a member of the county's development commission who lives near Granbury. "As Christians, do we think that trading 2,100 acres of natural beauty for godless technological complexes is moving us closer to the creation, or further away?"

"Do we think that entering into negotiations with Google, Meta and Amazon are closer to making a covenant with God, or making a deal with the devil?" he asked the council.

Christians, Long concluded to applause, must stand up against data centers.

Controversy surrounding data center construction has roiled Texas in recent months, fostering a bipartisan coalition of opposition, [particularly among](#) rural and suburban residents. With at least [248 planned data center projects](#) and 335 in operation, the state is poised to become a leader in data center development.

Much of the [opposition](#) focuses on environmental impact and the large amounts of water and power needed by massive facilities that operate AI applications. But opposition has also coalesced around religious appeals from a theologically diverse group of residents, leaders and politicians who see data center development as an affront to their most sacred values.

Clayton Tucker, a Democrat running for Texas agriculture commissioner, is a leader in the anti-data center movement. A Catholic, he wonders if data centers are akin to the apple in the Garden of Eden.

"If we take a bite of that apple of knowledge, is that what's going to kick us out of this blue marble of Eden ... that we call Earth?" he said.

Religion isn't solely the domain of the opposition. Texas Railroad Commissioner Wayne Christian, a Republican, said he supports data center construction because "throughout history, Christians have embraced innovations that improve lives, from the printing press to modern medicine."

"We should approach data centers the same way: embracing their benefits while ensuring they're built responsibly," Christian said in a statement.

For Long, biblical passages such as Daniel 2 and Revelation 13 reveal that there are spiritual implications to replacing God's creation "with things created by man."

The books of Daniel and Revelation, known as apocalyptic literature, have been interpreted in some theological circles as warnings about the misuse of technology — such as artificial intelligence — in ways that threaten God's intended order and vastly increase the government's ability to conduct surveillance.

"They're going to be able to track where we go, they're going to track our money. ... You're going to have to essentially stay in line socially," said Long, who believes this generation will be judged by its response to data centers.

"I just don't want to read that everybody complied, everybody gave in, everybody quit. I want to hear about this small contingent of people that stood on their principles, that saw it coming from a mile away, and said, 'We're not budging,'" he said.

Joseph Locke, a professor of Texas and American religious history at the University of North Texas in Denton, said he was not surprised Texans were making religious arguments against data centers.

"Texans have often drawn on religion when they want to enact social or political change," he said in a statement, adding that "the rhetoric of spiritual warfare is pretty common, especially among today's Christian nationalists and their conservative allies."

Long has hosted well-attended prayer meetings in his home and taken his fight online, where he is not alone. Religious arguments are a periodic feature of comments on several dozen [Facebook groups](#) dedicated to opposing data center development.

Last month, Clarendon resident Maria Miller [asked members](#) of the Texans United Against Data Centers Facebook group to pray against data centers.

Miller said she sees parallels between the rapid development of data centers and the story of the end times told in the Book of Revelation at the end of the New Testament. "It's kind of a no-brainer," she said in an interview.

'People of faith feel a moral duty'

Not all religiously grounded opposition sees data centers as apocalyptic or part of a larger cosmic battle between good and evil.

"People of faith feel a moral duty to make sure that people have the things they need to live lives of dignity and thriving, and so water and energy are really important for that," said the Rev. Becca Edwards of the interfaith policy advocacy group [Texas Impact](#). "We're called to be stewards of creation, which means caring for the world as God does. And I think what we see in the creation story is that the world was created to be a place of fruitfulness and plenty."

Locke said many Texans have drawn on their faith "to attack inequalities, provide for the needy and, yes, advocate for environmental protections."

In addition, conservative Christians have been "generally supportive of Texas' conservative economic and environmental policies," Locke said.

"The oil industry, for instance, has long been wed to conservative Christianity," he said. "Billy Graham was backed by Texas oilmen, and George W. Bush, who helped bring Texas' religious politics to Washington, D.C., was rooted in the oil industry."

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Texas churches also spoke out against inequality during the Gilded Age — a late 19th-century period of rapid industrial growth that produced extreme wealth inequality, Locke said. Evangelical leaders "helped to organize the Populist revolt of the 1880s and 1890s" and others "urged Texans to see the sins of our economic system," he said.

"Texas' conservative Christian nationalism may win the most headlines, but Texas religion contains multitudes," Locke said.

Tucker, the Democratic candidate for agriculture commissioner, is a fifth-generation Texan who ties his campaign to [Texas' populist movement](#) and focuses on issues that receive the most petition signatures on his website. A petition on data center development has been a top performer, and as long as it remains popular, "that's gonna be our top issue," Tucker said while driving between anti-data center meetings, many of them held in churches.

"Had you told me a year ago that running for agriculture commissioner, I'd be talking mostly about data centers, I would have looked at you funny," he said, adding that the facilities' high-volume water use caught his eye.

"If we run out of water, nothing else really matters," he said.

Long, who identifies as a conservative-leaning libertarian, said Tucker, although a Democrat, is "the only politician that is saying anything negative about data centers." Older Republicans, he added, "don't understand, like, the good versus evil fight that I believe we're in."

Polls show in many cases, opposition to data centers transcends political partisanship. According to a June poll by the [Texas Politics Project](#), 71% of registered Texas Democrats and 44% of registered Texas Republicans oppose data centers, with only 14% of Republicans strongly in support. National polls indicate even greater bipartisan alignment: A May [Gallup survey](#) found that 63% of Republicans and 75% of Democrats oppose data centers.

Long said he's also found himself in a surprising alliance over data centers with some "liberal white women."

"After the meeting ... we're hugging, and we're all on the same page, trying to fight this," he said.

'Humanity over injury and profit'

Elizabeth Dempsey Beggs, a Democrat running for the U.S. House in Virginia, called opposition to data centers a "unifying factor" that crosses political lines. Virginia is home to the world's largest data center market, with [about 685 operating or planned](#)

, and Texas advocates have looked to the state as a cautionary tale.

"I guarantee you Jesus would be outside right now flipping tables," Beggs said in [a recent public testimony](#) against data centers.

People "deserve a place that is safe to raise their children, and we know the harm that data centers are doing," Beggs said in an interview. "That's not something you can tolerate as a mother, as a citizen and as a Christian."

Long, who has nine children, said in [testimony](#) earlier this year that data centers create "a sacrificial zone" that negatively harms children. It is ironic, he said, that Hood County adopted a "sanctuary for the unborn" ordinance while not being a sanctuary for the born.

Some Jewish leaders have also based their opposition on religious grounds.

"At the core of most religious traditions is a recognition of the sanctity of life and humanity over injury and profit," Rabbi Jennie Rosenn, founder and CEO of the Jewish climate advocacy group [Dayenu](#), said in a statement.

Rosenn said data centers are an affront to Judaism's most foundational teachings of "life, not death (bacharta bahayim), protect creation (shomrei adamah), pursue justice (tirdof tzedek), not waste (bal tashchit), protect the most vulnerable (shomer ger yatom v'almanah), and ensure that life can continue l'dor v'dor (from generation to generation)."

"If this sounds like Judaism's greatest hits, it's because it is," Rosenn continued. "That is how fundamentally the explosive growth of data centers across our nation threatens the values we — and many other people of faith — hold most dear."

Jane Bannor, treasurer of Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community, a progressive advocacy group, said Unitarian Universalists around the nation are calling for moratoriums on data center construction based on a "respect for the interdependent web of life of which we are all a part."

"We want to see businesses benefit not just corporate shareholders, but also the surrounding population," Bannor said.

Tucker hopes religious-based opposition can affect the data center debate in Texas.

Faith appeals carry extra weight, he said, "when you can kind of tie (data centers) to those stories that are foundational to Christianity, that are foundational to a lot of our worldviews."