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Office of the Principal Chief

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**EXECUTIVE ORDER
2026-02-CTH**

EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING PRINCIPAL CHIEF’S TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE IMPACT OF DATA CENTERS ON THE ECONOMY AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE CHEROKEE NATION RESERVATION

1. **AUTHORITY:** The Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation.
2. **POLICY:** It is in the interest of the Cherokee Nation to balance its commitment to stay on the leading edge of technological advancement for the sake of operating efficient and effective government and business systems as well as serving as responsible stewards of natural resources. These interests intersect with emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, which increase demand for data centers and which in turn potentially generate economic opportunities and pressure on natural resources within the Cherokee Nation Reservation. In Executive Order 2024-07-CTH my Administration established a task force to study and make recommendations relating to the responsible and ethical use of AI by Cherokee Nation. That Task force produced a [report](#) in June of 2025 and a [policy](#) followed that same month. That executive order and the ensuring work was and remains important to the Cherokee Nation in meeting some of the interests identified above, but not all of those interests. Since the signing of the 2024 executive order, efforts to construct data centers supportive of AI, including northeastern Oklahoma, have been on the rise¹. Data Centers appear to potentially deliver some measurable and sustained level of positive economic impact and tax revenue but are also associated with negative

¹ See, e.g., “February 2026 Data Center Report: After Record Growth, the Outlook for the Year Ahead,” (ConstructionConnect.com, February 3, 2026) retrieved February 11, 2026, <https://news.constructconnect.com/february-2026-data-center-report-after-record-growth-the-outlook-for-the-year-ahead> (“Data center construction starts surged to \$77.7 billion in 2025, a 190% year-over-year increase, with Q4 alone accounting for \$44.4 billion.”)

environmental impacts on energy costs rates². Accordingly, my Administration must focus on the economic and environmental impact of data centers. Cherokee Nation must be in as strong a position as possible to understand the relevant issues and understand the tools and resources at its disposal to help shape the debate over the development of and operation of data centers. Therefore, this Executive Order establishing the Principal Chief’s Task Force to Study the Impact of Data Centers on the Economy and Natural Environment of the Cherokee Nation Reservation to conduct a threshold examination of relevant subjects is warranted.

3. **Principal Chief’s Task Force on Data Centers:** There is hereby established the Principal Chief’s Task Force to Study the Impact of Data Centers on the Economy and Natural Environment of the Cherokee Nation Reservation, operating pursuant to the composition, objectives and other parameters set forth herein, and alternatively known as the Principal Chief’s Task Force on Data Centers.

a. **Composition:** The Principal Chief’s Task Force on Data Centers shall be composed of the following members:

- i. **Christina Justice**, Cherokee Nation Secretary of Natural Resources (Chair)
- ii. **Dr. Corey Bunch**, Cherokee Nation Chief of Staff (Co-Chair)
- iii. **Andy McMillan**, Cherokee Nation Businesses, Director of Economic Development
- iv. **Ed Fite**, Cherokee Nation Environmental Protection Commission
- v. **Paula Starr**, Cherokee Nation Chief Information Officer.
- vi. **Kim Teehee**, Cherokee Nation Businesses VP of Government Relations (or designee)
- vii. **Paiten Qualls**, Cherokee Nation Deputy Attorney General (*designee of Attorney General Chad Harsha*)
- viii. **Julie Hubbard**, Cherokee Nation Executive Director of Communications
- ix. **Dawni Squirrel**, Cultural Advisor

b. **Engagement, Administration**

- i. **Engaging Internal and External Expertise:** The Task Force may engage such internal and external experts in relevant fields as necessary to effectuate the purposes and polices of this order, provided:

² See “What Happens When Data Centers Come to Town,” Nguyen, Terry and Green, Ben (University of Michigan, July 2025) retrieved February 11, 2026, <https://stpp.fordschool.umich.edu/sites/stpp/files/2025-07/stpp-data-centers-2025.pdf>

1. The Task Force should seek to achieve a reasonable degree of perspective balance among internal and external expertise in order to achieve the Task Force's interests in achieving perspective balance.
 2. The Task For shall maintain a record of the names and affiliations of the external experts engaged under paragraph 3.b of this order.
 3. Task force members, internal experts and external experts must disclose their relationship with all third parties which have an interest in the subject matters under review, which shall be compiled in a single record maintained by the chair of the Task Force for the resolution of, in the opinion of the Chair, any disabling conflicts of interests.
- ii. **Soliciting Citizen Input:** The Task Force should solicit input from Cherokee Nation citizens on subjects relevant to this Order.
 - iii. **Administrative Assistance and Expense:** The Task Force may request the assignment of such clerical and administrative assistance as necessary to perform its work. Additionally, the Task Force is generally authorized administrative expense funds available under the budget of the Secretary of Natural Resources or Administration to fund its work, subject to approval of specific amounts.
- c. **Objectives:** The Task Force should conduct a threshold examination of the following subjects:
- i. Where within the Cherokee Nation Reservation do data centers exist and what are the locations of any planned data centers?
 - ii. What is the regional outlook for the construction of and operation of data centers?
 - iii. What environmental concerns are associated with data centers?
 - iv. What economic opportunities or detriments attend the development and operation of data centers?
 - v. Do any economic opportunities relating to data center development and operation align with Cherokee Nation's business interests?
 - vi. What barriers or opportunities exist with respect to efforts by Cherokee Nation to mitigate any economic detriments or harm to the environment and its citizens relating to data center development or operations?
 - vii. What governmental policies relating to data center development or operations presently under consideration at the state or federal level should Cherokee Nation consider for advocacy?

- viii. What efforts can Cherokee Nation undertake to better understand concerns, questions and opinions of its citizens relating to data center development and operations?
 - ix. What efforts can Cherokee Nation undertake to provide factual and unbiased information relating to data center development or operations to its citizens?
 - x. To what extent does Cherokee Nation and its entities utilize data centers?
 - xi. What impact does the Nation and its entities' utilization of AI have on these systems?
- d. **Deadline:** The Task Force shall complete its work and issue a final report by June 30, 2026, unless extended in writing by the Principal Chief.
- e. **Transparency:** Although the Task Force is an executive branch advisory group and not a public body within the meaning of the Cherokee Nation Freedom of Information Act, its final report shall be distributed to Cherokee Nation elected officials and to the general public via the Cherokee Nation website within 45 days of completion.
4. **ORDER:** The Principal Chief's Task Force to Study the Impact of Data Centers on the Economy and Natural Environment of the Cherokee Nation Reservation is hereby created to achieve the purposes and policies set forth in this order.
5. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Order is effective immediately on this date, February 26, 2026, and expires June 30, 2026, unless extended in writing by the Principal Chief.



Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation