

## **Robert People will fight for universal access to reliable, affordable, and clean energy services for the health of the people and our environment.**

*Since Donald Trump's term started in 2025, his administration has made decisions for the benefit of the fossil fuel industry and to the detriment of regular people. Electricity rates are up 8% since Trump took office and here in District 15, residents have been significantly impacted by increased electricity costs. 47% of Floridians already struggle to meet basic costs of living. With the addition of increased expenses due to natural disaster impacts and insurance costs, Florida's working and middle-class families are being priced out of living here.*

### **Policy Proposals**

#### **Utility Costs:**

- Preserve and strengthen Federal funding for LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program)
- Support Data Center regulations/moratorium
- Carbon pricing with household dividend rebates

#### **Clean Energy:**

- Restore and expand clean energy investments for investments in wind, solar, and battery storage
- End fossil fuel subsidies
- Federal clean energy standards targeting 100% clean grid by 2040

#### **Environmental Protections:**

- Restore EPA standards
- Preserve Endangered Species protections
- Center environmental justice in climate legislation – ensuring communities most impacted by pollution are the first to benefit from clean energy

#### **Disaster Preparedness:**

- Restore FEMA programs for recovery efforts and building community resilience to environmental impacts

## Utility Costs:

Duke Energy's profit margins are 17% and TECO's are 19%. TECO bills have increased 86% — totaling about \$980 more annually — between December 2020 and January 2026. These utility companies are investor-owned monopolies focused on maximizing shareholder profits. Customers cannot choose their provider and the state approves rate increases. Duke and TECO's profit margins are above the industry average of 12.8% and higher than the single digit profit margins of most other industries. Florida Legislators need to address this affordability crisis and were set to do so in the 2026 legislative session with the Affordable Energy Reform Act before Florida Power and Light lobbyists persuaded them to let the bill die. Florida Legislators need to pass this bill.

**LIHEAP:** At the Federal level, one of the programs that assists low-income Americans is LIHEAP (low-income home energy assistance program). The Trump administration has put funding for this program on the chopping block in 2025 with the One Big Ugly Bill until backlash led to these cuts being reversed and they have again put this funding on the chopping block in their budget proposal in 2026. This is despite the rising fuel costs resulting from supply disruptions for oil and liquified natural gas due to the Iran War. LIHEAP provides heating and colling assistance to roughly 6.7 million households nationally. In 2025, households with children who could not afford their electric bill for at least one month of the year increased to 33.1% and 41.5% of households with children went without paying for other basic household needs to afford their bill for at least one month.

Not only do we need to fund LIHEAP at the stable, consistent level it's required for 40 years, we need to explore how to improve and strengthen the program. The beneficial impacts of LIHEAP for working class families could be improved through an increase in the allowed income cap to qualify to 250% of the poverty line which would be \$82,500 for a family of four and through guidelines that allow states to provide assistance to ensure no family is paying more than 3% of their income towards energy costs. These guidelines for assistance could require weatherization assessments and remediation for continued support. They could also factor in the average energy usage per person in an area to guard against any independent household overuse of energy. Providing this assistance would also give the state data on increased costs and affordability for residents to allow for better-informed policy decisions. LIHEAP emergency assistance also needs to include cooling costs for any state where average temperatures exceed specified thresholds. LIHEAP has been historically focused on heating costs but as we know in Florida, high temperatures can also be detrimental to individuals' health without interventions to prevent overheating. For long-term impacts, LIHEAP assistance could include support for households to begin implementing alternative energy sources – while this will require more investment in the short-term, the implications on sustainability, affordability, and overall community impacts would likely outweigh this cost.

**Data Center Regulations:** Data centers are buildings that house computer servers used for data storage, data analytics, Artificial Intelligence, and streaming services. They present health risks and utilize limited community resources in a way that negatively impacts the residents who live nearby. They produce several forms of pollution, noise, air, and light. Noise pollution occurs as the building is constructed and after it begins operations diesel generators, heating, ventilation, and HVAC create constant hums that can be heard by neighbors and wildlife. The noise can reach 90 decibels which is loud enough to harm hearing. Large data facilities require all night lighting which can disrupt sleep patterns as well as migratory and habitat behaviors of wildlife. According to a 2025 study, air pollution of particulate matter and nitrogen oxides from data centers in 2030 could cause approximately 600,000 asthma symptom cases and 1300 premature deaths costing \$20 billion.

Data centers impact resources with large data centers consuming as much as 5 million gallons of water each day, equivalent to the usage of a town of 10,000-50,000 people. Even a medium data center can consume as much as 1,000 households water usage in a year. Some of this water is required to cool servers so they do not overheat. The total water impacts are related to water use on site, water use by the power plant to provide electricity to meet the data center need, and water consumption that occurs to manufacture the processing chips. Data centers also consume electricity as large load customers drawing as much as 10,000 to 25,000 households. When utility companies have to add capacity to accommodate these types of customers, rates may increase for all users in the area and sometimes incentives to entice development limits the ability to pass those costs to the data center. “Hyperscale” data centers focused on AI consume even more of these local resources. A Meta data center planned for Wyoming is expected to use as much electricity as every house in the state combined.

Even if data centers use reclaimed or recycled water then that is no longer returning to the base flow of rivers or streams and evaporative cooling leaves salts and other contaminants impacting water quality. Data centers can use air-cooling technology to use less water but this requires more energy which means we need more energy production using clean energy sources. Alternately, data centers can use server liquid cooling as a method to cool servers that uses minimal water. The less water used at the data center the better for water supplies and for the capacity of local facilities to manage waste from evaporation. Another significant portion of the water consumed for data centers is by steam-generating power plants that rely on fossil fuels. In 2023, a federal report estimated that the indirect water consumption from electricity use was another 211 billion gallons of water. Each chip in a data center has used thousands of gallons of water for manufacturing before it is even installed.

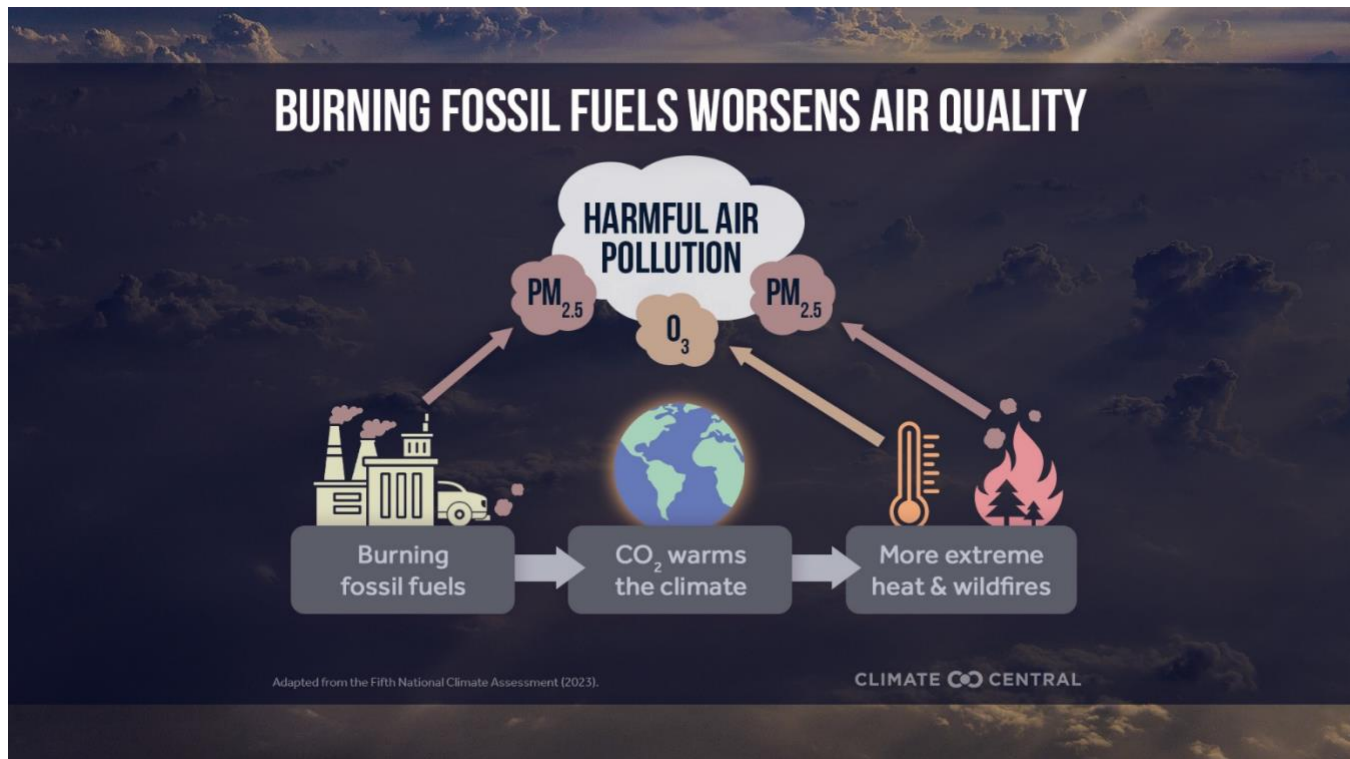
To responsibly address the impacts of data centers on their local communities, we need to implement policies that put guardrails and guidelines on them. Local communities need to be involved in the decisions and need to be able to have a voice in the decision-making process. At the federal level, we need to establish rules to require that they use lower water consumption techniques for cooling their

servers – liquid cooling, air cooling, or free cooling. Companies must be required to provide public disclosures on water impacts which include the secondary water use, and the companies need to pay annual fees for each thousand gallons used. These fees can be reinvested in the local community for infrastructure and environmental protection initiatives. Data centers should also be required to use wind or solar energy and invest in local grid expansion using clean energy sources. Data center construction should be required to meet ISO 14001.2026 standards for environmental management systems. A moratorium on building these facilities needs to be enacted until existing facilities are retrofitted appropriately and studies are completed to inform the appropriate regulations for protecting our environment and residents of these communities.

**Carbon Pricing:** Carbon pricing charges emitters for their tons of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Thirteen states have carbon pricing policies and are successfully reducing emissions. These are cap-and-trade programs that limit the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that can be emitted by certain facilities. Whether through a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade program, implementing carbon pricing will incentivize businesses to transition to clean energy. The carbon pricing revenues received by the government are then distributed as dividends to American households each month and can be used however the household chooses but can offset any increased costs for goods that arise through the transition to clean energy. Robert People will support legislation to enact a federal carbon pricing model.

## **Clean Energy:**

**Clean Energy Investments:** The Trump administration paid a French energy company almost 1 billion dollars to halt wind energy projects that could have powered 1.3 million homes and businesses. The repeal of these led to the loss of 35 billion in investments and nearly 40,000 manufacturing jobs. It's projected to add \$28 billion to energy bills by 2030. The Inflation Reduction Act passed under President Biden included the largest clean energy investment in history but many of the provisions were eliminated or scaled back by Trump administration legislation such as the One Big Ugly Bill. The Iran War further highlights the need for investments in clean energy as it is largely protected from geopolitical impacts unlike the price of oil. Despite the administration's attacks on renewable energy, it still rose to 26% of power produced in 2025. To further the goal of increasing our use of clean, renewable energy, Robert People will support legislation that aligns with the recommendations made by the Climate Action Campaign: <https://www.actonclimate.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/CAC-Principles-for-Clean-Energy-Deployment.pdf>



**Fossil Fuel Subsidies:** Fossil fuels worsen air quality resulting in negative health impacts for residents and contributing to worsening climate crises. Fossil fuels are coal, crude oil, and natural gases all of which have high carbon content. These resources are extracted through drilling, mining, and fracking – all processes which have their own negative environmental impacts. These processes leach nutrients from our land and disrupt critical wildlife habitats. All of these can pollute drinking water and jeopardize freshwater and ocean ecosystems. They also produce large amounts of wastewater which can leak or overflow into aquifers and waterways. Even before they are burned fossil fuels emit air pollutants that have been linked to cancer and blood disorders. Burning these carbon-rich resources results in large amounts of carbon dioxide. In fact, burning fossil fuels accounts for about ¾ of our carbon emissions in the United States. Beyond carbon dioxide, fossil fuels produce mercury, arsenic, benzene, soot, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and carbon monoxide, all of which have negative health and environmental impacts. Our seas become more acidic and biodiversity decreases.

The Federal government has provided oil and gas companies with direct financial subsidies, cheap and plentiful land access for operations, and predictable permitting. Fossil fuels are subsidized through tax credits and deductions, special accounting methods, direct payments from taxpayers, mandated leases of public lands, reduced royalties payments for federal land use, cheaper per-acre rent, streamlined and

fast-tracked permits, government services to maintain infrastructure and the military to protect overseas interests, and a lack of accountability for cleanup costs and pollution impacts. Oil, gas, and coal have received \$549 billion in direct tax subsidies over the last 150 years. They also pay about 40% less to lease land than the solar industry median rent. Renewables are the cheapest source of energy yet the Trump administration is pushing to continue giving advantages to the oil, gas, and coal industries. Robert People will support legislation to end subsidies for fossil fuels so that our government is not using taxpayer dollars to incentivize companies to continue business practices that damage our health and our environment.

**Clean Energy by 2040:** Once Congress has restored the focus on clean, renewable energy and stopped the Trump administration’s attacks on these initiatives, the focus needs to shift toward the long-term goal of have clean energy by 2040 as outlined by the House Select Committee on Climate Crisis (<https://castor.house.gov/climatecrisis/issues/electric-grid.html>)

### **Environmental protections:**

**EPA Standards:** Since the beginning of his second term, Donald Trump has been focused on promoting energy production using fossil fuels as he promised the oil executives he would do if they supported his campaign. Two months later the EPA announced a plan to roll back 31 environmental protections related to clean air, clean water, and climate change. This has included the 2009 endangerment finding which is the scientific and legal basis for regulating greenhouse gas emissions. Trump also issued seven EPA rule exemptions for six industries which allows 180 facilities to evade hazardous air pollution standards for at least two years. Trump also issues an Executive Order to roll back fuel economy standards set during Obama’s presidency. The repeal of these by the Trump Administration will cost drivers a new \$180 billion over three decades with higher fuel, maintenance, and insurance costs. Beyond removing environmental protections, the administration is also not enforcing the laws that still exist. The number of lawsuits for polluting fell to 16 in the first year of Donald Trump’s second term, which is 76% -87% lower than the first year of the last three presidential terms, including Trump’s first term. In Congress, Robert People will fight for environmental protections and will support legislation which reinstates and reinforces EPA standards. He will oppose measures by congress to approve the removal of protections from public land to allow mining, drilling, or fracking such as the bill that Congress passed removing protections for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota and the administration’s efforts to allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

**Endangered Species Protections:** The Trump administration has tried to weaken protections for endangered species. Four provisions that were issues in 2019 and retained under Biden were overturned in court in March 2026. These provisions were the requirement that a species “whole habitat” had to be impacted to prevent projects, a requirement that only the actions that were “reasonably certain” to occur as a result of a project needed to be considered, a requirement that US Fish and Wildlife would accept

mitigation efforts based on an entity just saying they would do them with no actual plans, and allowing FWC and NOAA fisheries to ignore negative species impacts. Despite this victory, endangered species protections are still at risk. Specifically impacting Florida and District 15, the endangered species committee issued an exemption for compliance with the endangered species act for oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Mexico. Many of our Tampa Bay residents still remember the BP oil spill in 2010 that greatly impacted our gulf coast wildlife and caused harm to our gulf coast community economies. Robert People will oppose efforts to expand deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and will support legislation to enshrine protections for our biodiversity and to prevent increased climate impacts for our region.

**Center Climate Justice:** Those who live, work, and play in our most polluted environment are often people of color and they are people living in poverty. Every person in the United States should have the same environmental protections and benefits and should be considered in setting policies. We see that this isn't what has been systemically happening in our country when we look at communities like Memphis facing negative impacts of an AI data center or Lowndes County, Alabama with inadequate sewage infrastructure, or Flint, Michigan with lead pipes. Infrastructure improvements are more often made in wealthier and whiter communities. Marginalized areas have highways, waste storage, industrial warehouses, and a lack of green spaces or shade. Under the Biden administration, 40% of investments in infrastructure were toward climate and clean energy in disadvantaged communities. The Trump administration has gutted environmental justice initiatives, closing all of the EPA regional offices to address this issue and all under the guise of "anti-DEI". As we move forward with policies to increase access to affordable, clean energy and mitigate pollution and environmental hazards, Robert People will always keep these constituents at top of mind. People who have been most impacted for the longest time need to receive the support to improve their environment most urgently. Legislation to address these issues needs to include community feedback on policies and a targeted focus on addressing the most urgent needs first rather than the needs of the people who can donate the most.

### **Disaster preparedness:**

Between 2021 and 2024, home insurance rates have increased by 24 percent nationwide. Florida homeowners have seen premiums increase 34% to 40% since 2022. Between 2020 and 2024, disasters caused by extreme weather and climate change led to 2,520 deaths and 747 billion dollars of damage. In 2024, the Tampa Bay area was hit hard by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Helene caused major damages to tens of thousands of homes and within weeks Milton followed behind causing between 21 billion and 34 billion dollars of damage. That same year, Representative Laurel Lee voted against a stopgap measure to keep funding FEMA through December 2024 claiming it was due to the belief that continuing resolutions for budgets are inappropriate. She has consistently voted for continuing resolutions in Donald Trump's second term. Without the risk mitigation provided through disaster funding, home insurance rates will only continue to increase.

In 2025, Laurel Lee voted for the One Big Ugly Bill which rescinded funds from NOAA for financial and technical assistance to coastal states to enable preparation for extreme weather and for weather research and forecasting innovations. During his second term, Donald Trump's administration has also been delaying and denying requests for disaster assistance. As of October 2025, at least 12 state requests had been denied for aid. The administration tried to end the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC). The BRIC program began in 2018 and was extremely popular but cancelled under "waste, fraud, and abuse" measures in 2025. 20 states sued to block them. In March 2026, a judge ruled that the administration had to provide this funding. There will be two years of applicants trying to secure funds for their communities and the administration plans to prioritize "major infrastructure projects". Now that a judge has required the program to resume, there is no answer as to whether projects addressing climate change impacts will be funded.

Donald Trump's proposed 2027 budget includes deep cuts to the EPA, FEMA, and for climate resilience programs through other federal agencies. It would cut state and local preparedness funding by \$1.3 billion and cut NOAA by \$1.6 billion eliminating climate adaptation partnerships and resilience grants. No representative of District 15 should ever support these kinds of cuts to funding as they will have significant negative impacts on our residents. Robert People will fight to keep disaster preparedness and recovery support funded for our communities.

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