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# NEWS

## ***American Battlefield Trust Coalition to Protect Prince William County***

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### **LOCAL RESIDENTS, AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST FILE APPEAL IN PRINCE WILLIAM DIGITAL GATEWAY FIGHT**

***Lawsuit challenges rezoning for colossal data center campus adjacent to  
historic Manassas Battlefield***

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**(Prince William County, Va.)** — The lawsuit to overturn rezonings and block construction of the Prince William Digital Gateway continues, as nine local residents and the nonprofit American Battlefield Trust have appealed the [Circuit Court’s October 31 demurrer ruling](#) to the Virginia Court of Appeals. The suit outlines how a lame-duck Prince William County Board of Supervisors illegally approved a trio of rezonings to clear the way for construction of the world’s largest data center complex immediately adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park in December 2023.

Attorney and former State Senator Chap Petersen, who represents the Trust and citizen plaintiffs in the lawsuit, remains confident in the challenge: “There is no question that the Prince William County Board of Supervisors violated state law and its own code in approving these rezonings. I am confident the Court of Appeals will recognize the merit of our case and order the board to reconsider its shortsighted decision.”

In the aftermath of the Board’s rezoning of 2,100 acres, the American Battlefield Trust, which owns adjacent lands, and nine other neighboring individuals [filed a lawsuit outlining an array of legal violations in that approval process](#). These range from the lack of required information about the proposed development; inadequate public notice and hearings; unlawful waivers of key analyses, submissions and approvals; failure to consider key environmental and historical facts; and unlawful delegation of rezoning power to the data center developers by not requiring they identify which portions would be put to what uses.

“[The Trust has been fighting this ill-conceived proposal for years](#) and has no intention of standing aside in the face this setback,” said American Battlefield Trust President David N. Duncan. “While disappointed by the Circuit Court’s dismissal, we firmly believe that our case has merit and deserves to be heard at the appellate level. The Trust has been in this position before and we are determined to see this battle through.”

Elena Schlossberg, executive director of the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, which supports the citizen plaintiffs, emphasized the stakes of the fight: “The Digital Gateway proposal encapsulates the threat digital industrialization poses to protected historical lands, plus access to clean water, reliable affordable power, and a predictability in the local democratic process. The lack of transparency from its inception is only amplified by the distorted process, or lack thereof, that clouds its final approval. We will continue to fight because this kind of destruction cannot go unchallenged.”

Although not directly party to the lawsuit, the Coalition joined with five other leading conservation groups — the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Coalition to

## Local Residents, American Battlefield Trust, File Appeal (continued)

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Protect America’s National Parks, Preservation Virginia and the Piedmont Environmental Council — to [file an \*amicus curiae\* brief](#) in support of the challenge to the Prince William Digital Gateway.

Attempts to develop on and around Virginia’s battlefields are nothing new. Since the 1980s Northern Virginia has experienced increasingly frequent attempts at inappropriate development near these hallowed grounds — from a plan to develop 60 acres near Manassas National Battlefield Park, including land that was Robert E. Lee’s headquarters during the Second Battle of Manassas; to a Walmart superstore near what Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James McPherson dubbed “the nerve center of the Union Army during the Battle of the Wilderness” in Orange County, 15 miles west of Fredericksburg. These near-catastrophic losses, however, turned into victories for historic preservation.

The American Battlefield Trust is dedicated to preserving America’s hallowed battlegrounds and educating the public about what happened there and why it matters today. The nonprofit, nonpartisan organization has protected nearly 60,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War across 160 sites in 25 states. Learn more at [www.battlefields.org](http://www.battlefields.org).

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