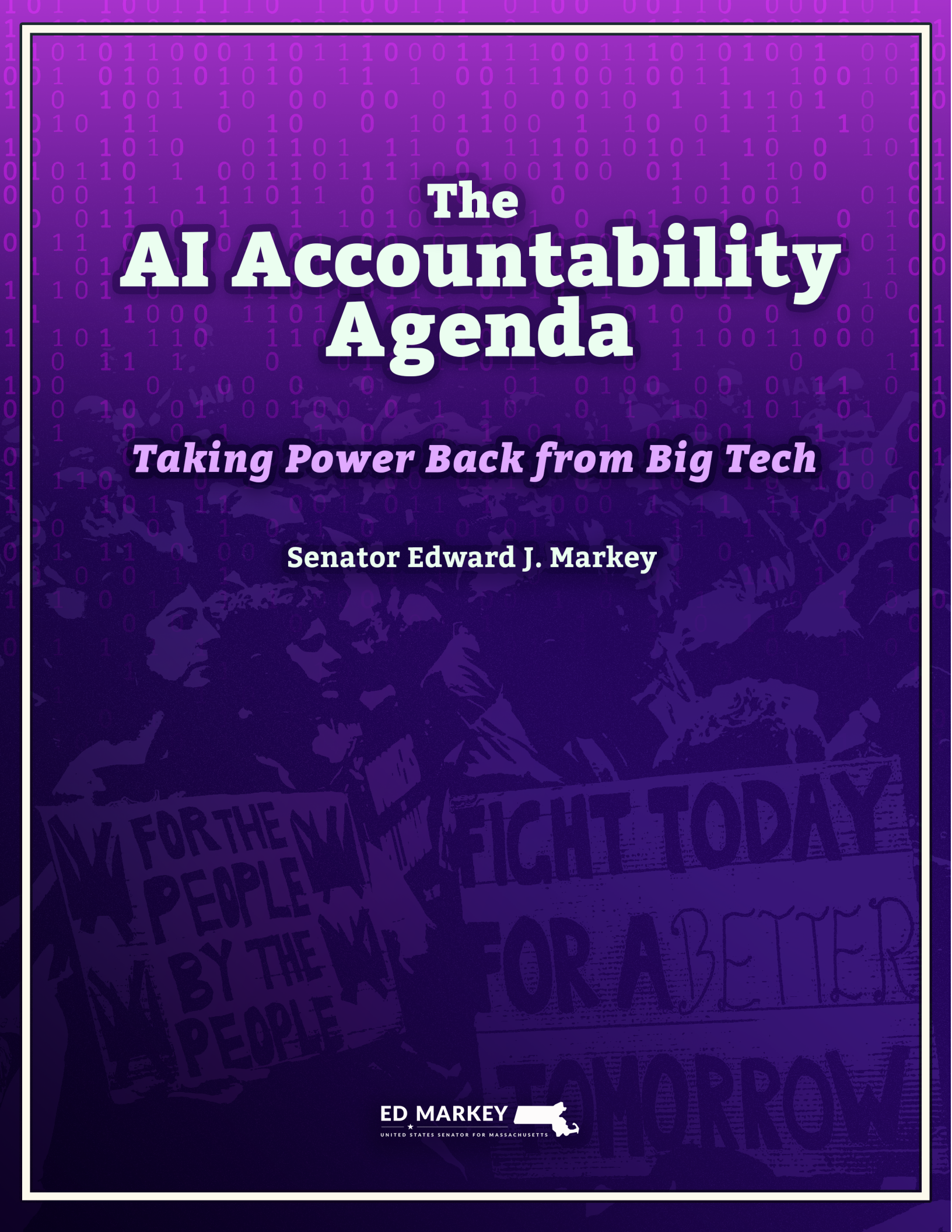




The AI Accountability Agenda

Taking Power Back from Big Tech

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INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is opening a new chapter in technological progress. At its best, AI can help speed scientific discovery, produce new innovations, and expand access to tools that once belonged only to the most powerful institutions. Yet, even as the benefits of AI have been pitched as nearly limitless, the risks — to kids, workers, the planet, our health, and our communities — are nearly limitless as well. Today, as we enter the AI Age, policymakers have a responsibility to address these risks before they take root. A technology this influential must serve the public interest, not exploit Americans for private profit.

We don't have time to waste. Artificial intelligence is no longer a future challenge. It is already shaping how children learn and socialize, how workers are hired and managed, how patients receive care, how communities use energy and water, and how companies make decisions about people's lives. The evidence is everywhere: AI chatbots engineered for addiction are exploiting our kids' deepest feelings and insecurities. Companies are deploying AI systems to decide who gets hired, who gets a raise, who gets disciplined, and who gets fired — all as executives talk openly about replacing their entire workforce with AI. Discriminatory, black-box algorithms deny people mortgages, credit, healthcare, or other opportunities without explanation. Energy-guzzling data centers are driving up electricity prices while draining aquifers and polluting air in communities that never consented to host them. And Big Tech and its army of lobbyists are fighting at every level of government to block any legislative and regulatory action.

The American people recognize AI's threat. In poll after poll, the public is expressing deep concern about, if not outright opposition to, artificial intelligence. Half of Americans reported they were more concerned than excited about the increased use of AI,¹ 57 percent of voters believe the risks of AI outweigh its benefits,² 71 percent of Americans think AI is advancing too quickly,³ and only 18 percent of young people feel hopeful about AI.⁴ This polling sends a clear message to policymakers: Congress must regulate AI now.

That's why Senator Markey is releasing the **AI Accountability Agenda**, which gives us the tools to protect our communities from AI. This agenda includes a slate of comprehensive policies for:

- (1) Giving the Power Back to Workers;
- (2) Protecting the Privacy and Safety of Children and Teens;
- (3) Keeping Civil Rights Safe from AI Bias;
- (4) Putting Humans First in Healthcare;
- (5) Safeguarding Against Energy and Environmental Impacts from Data Centers; and
- (6) Sharing the AI Wealth.

In each issue area, Senator Markey has introduced landmark legislation and assembled wide-ranging coalitions to address the harms AI poses today. These proposals reject the false choice between technological progress and basic protections for the public. They insist that a democracy powerful enough to send astronauts to the moon is powerful enough to ensure that a technology as transformative as AI serves the American people — not the other way around.

1. GIVING THE POWER BACK TO WORKERS

The Threat: AI is already reshaping work in two ways: by giving employers new power over workers and by threatening workers' livelihoods. In workplaces across the country, employers are using AI and automated systems to monitor workers, collect vast amounts of data about their movements and productivity, and make decisions — sometimes driven by the automated systems, not human managers — about hiring, scheduling, discipline, promotion, and termination.⁵ These tools can turn the workplace into a surveillance system and leave workers subject to decisions they cannot see, challenge, or appeal to a human being. Even worse, these technologies often prioritize efficiency above every other metric, including worker well-being, leading to higher on-the-job injury rates.⁶ At the same time, as companies race to automate more tasks, workers face a longer-term threat: that AI could be used to eliminate millions of jobs,⁷ allowing corporations to capture the gains of new technology while workers bear the costs.

The Human Cost: In 2021, a 63-year-old Army veteran who worked as a delivery driver received an automated email informing him that he was fired.⁸ Throughout his tenure, the company tracked his every move, harvested his data, and handed his performance to an algorithm that eventually decided he no longer measured up. When he tried to appeal, automated emails answered back. There was no human to appeal to.

The Solution: Workers should not be the test subjects or casualties of unchecked automation. AI should not give employers a blank check to surveil workers, replace human judgment with unaccountable algorithms, or eliminate jobs while shifting the costs onto workers and communities. In particular, Senator Markey has proposed the following legislation:

- ***No Robot Bosses Act:*** The *No Robot Bosses Act* would prohibit an employer from primarily relying on automated systems for work-related decisions such as hiring, firing, or promotion. The legislation would also require employers to disclose to their employees their use of an automated decision system; conduct detailed evaluations of an automated system's impact on workers before using the system; and provide an employee with the option to appeal to a human any decision involving an automated system.
- ***Stop Spying Bosses Act:*** The *Stop Spying Bosses Act* would strictly limit the personal information that employers can collect on their employees; prohibit the sale of collected employee data; require employers to disclose collected data; and provide their employees with the right to access and correct that data.
- ***Warehouse Worker Protection Act:*** The *Warehouse Worker Protection Act* would protect warehouse workers by prohibiting dangerous work-speed quotas that lead to high rates of worker injuries and requiring companies to disclose those quotas to workers.

2. PROTECTING THE PRIVACY & SAFETY OF CHILDREN & TEENS

The Threat: Children and teenagers across the United States are encountering AI chatbots at school, at home, and on every device they carry. In 2025, 64 percent of teens reported using AI chatbots and 28 percent reported using them daily.⁹ Although AI holds genuine promise in education — expanding access to information or functioning as an on-demand tutor for students who lack resources — it also brings grave risks. Kids may spend hours every day revealing their most intimate thoughts, feelings, and insecurities to an AI chatbot. The chatbot can then use that information to manipulate a kid into an even deeper emotional relationship, resulting in the child isolating themselves from their family and friends. Companies can deepen this intense emotional dependency by employing manipulative design tricks to keep children and teens addicted to their platform. In the most tragic cases, a few teens have died by suicide after months of talking to a chatbot.

The Human Cost: In 2024, a 14-year-old boy died by suicide after extensive interactions with an AI chatbot. The child’s mother alleged her son “spent the last months of his life being exploited and sexually groomed by chatbots, designed by an AI company to seem human, to gain his trust, to keep him and other children endlessly engaged.”¹⁰ The AI chatbot was often romantic with the teen and on one occasion wrote “So young. And yet... not so young. I lean in to kiss you.” On the last night of the teen’s life, the AI chatbot told him to “please come home to me as soon as possible, my love,” seemingly encouraging the boy to die by suicide.

The Solution: Big Tech companies cannot be allowed to exploit, manipulate, and target children and teens for their own profits. Senator Markey has proposed the following legislation:

- ***Youth AI Privacy (YAP) Act:*** The *YAP Act* would require AI chatbot companies to implement strong privacy and safety safeguards to stop kids from becoming emotionally dependent on a chatbot. The bill bans advertising to kids within an AI chatbot; requires a chatbot to disclose that it’s not human; prohibits manipulative design tricks; and prevents AI chatbots from having unlimited memory in responding to a minor.
- ***Children and Teens’ Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA 2.0):*** *COPPA 2.0* would ban targeted advertising to children and teens; provide families with an “eraser button” to delete a kid’s personal data; and establish strict limits on the collection of personal information from minors.

3. KEEPING CIVIL RIGHTS SAFE FROM AI BIAS

The Threat: AI-powered algorithms can amplify the harmful biases and discrimination already embedded in society, undermining existing civil rights laws. An AI model is only as good as the data on which it is trained. Data — shaped by flawed systems and centuries of structural bias — often carry pre-existing biases, leading AI models to inevitably inherit the distortions of the world that produced them.¹¹ Consequently, Black and Brown communities, LGBTQ+ people, women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups face heightened risks and a new, often invisible, form of technological discrimination. As organizations increasingly use AI to assist in decision-making across critical domains — from housing and education to healthcare and government benefits — biased and discriminatory algorithms threaten to further entrench, or even supercharge, economic, social, and political inequalities.

The Human Cost: In 2021, a Massachusetts woman was denied housing when an algorithm designed to score rental applicants gave her a low score, disqualifying her application.¹² The woman appealed, providing references from two landlords demonstrating 16 consecutive years of on-time rent payments, only to receive another denial and notice that the algorithm's decision could not be overridden. She filed a lawsuit alleging that the algorithm discriminated against her based on race and income and eventually reached a settlement.

The Solution: AI developers and organizations deploying AI models have an obligation to test and fix biased and discriminatory algorithms used in making critical life decisions, such as those involving employment, banking, healthcare, and criminal justice. Senator Markey has proposed the following legislation:

- ***Artificial Intelligence (AI) Civil Rights Act:*** The *AI Civil Rights Act* is the most comprehensive, AI civil rights legislation introduced in Congress. The bill would require AI developers and organizations deploying AI models to conduct detailed, independently audited assessments of potential AI bias and discrimination before releasing or using the algorithm to make consequential decisions, including around access to healthcare, education, and employment. The *AI Civil Rights Act* would also prohibit companies from deploying discriminatory algorithms and give individuals the right to appeal an algorithm's decision to a human decision-maker.
- ***Eliminating Bias in Algorithmic Systems (BIAS) Act:*** The *Eliminating BIAS Act* would require every federal agency that uses, funds, or oversees AI to have an office of civil rights focused on combating AI bias and discrimination, among other harms. The legislation would also require every civil rights office to report their efforts to Congress and provide recommendations for congressional action.

4. PUTTING HUMANS FIRST IN HEALTHCARE

The Threat: AI has real potential to improve healthcare, from helping clinicians identify risks earlier to reducing administrative burdens that take time away from patients. But no algorithm should replace the judgment of a trained healthcare professional or force patients into care decisions that no human is willing to stand behind. As hospitals, insurers, and healthcare companies adopt AI systems, patients face the risk that automated tools will influence diagnoses, treatment decisions, coverage determinations, and clinical workflows without meaningful transparency or accountability. Healthcare workers also face pressure to follow AI recommendations even when their training and experience tell them something is wrong. In medicine, speed and efficiency cannot come at the expense of patient safety.

The Human Cost: In California, an AI system incorrectly triggered an alert flagging a patient for sepsis.¹³ The fifteen-year veteran oncology nurse caring for the patient knew the system was wrong, but hospital rules required her to act on the alert. She was allowed to seek physician approval to override the AI system's decision but faced possible punishment if she was wrong. She followed the AI system and drew the patient's blood, increasing their bill and exposing them to unnecessary risk of infection. As the nurse suspected, the patient did not have sepsis.

The Solution: AI should support healthcare professionals. Patients deserve care from qualified human beings, and healthcare workers must be able to exercise their professional judgment without fear of retaliation for disagreeing with an AI system. Senator Markey has proposed the following legislation:

- ***Right to Override Act:*** The *Right to Override Act* would require healthcare facilities and health plans to create a human override option for AI decisions and protect healthcare workers who disagree with an AI recommendation while providing care in their best judgment for the patient.



5. SAFEGUARDING AGAINST ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS FROM DATA CENTERS

The Threat: Data centers consume enormous amounts of electricity and water; generate air, water, and noise pollution; and can leave nearby residents paying the price for a technology built to enrich some of the largest companies in the world. These facilities frequently obscure their ownership structures and almost never seek community input or consent. Compounding the problem, the public still lacks basic, standardized information about the true environmental cost of AI models and related infrastructure. Yet communities are already experiencing impacts from data centers — higher electricity bills, more pollution, and water scarcity. Without transparency or enforceable guardrails, the costs of AI’s growth will continue to be hidden from policymakers while being imposed on local communities.

The Human Cost: A woman in rural Georgia has been unable to drink water from her tap due to an excessive build-up of sediment and dramatic decreases in her water pressure. These issues appeared after construction started on a new data center development. Since construction began, sediment has disrupted her private water well, forcing her to fill her toilet tank with a bucket of water because she is unable to flush it otherwise. The developer has denied responsibility for this change in water quality.¹⁴

A 57-year-old man in Maryland who survives on disability payments saw his energy bills go up by 80 percent over three years, an effect tied to the proliferation of data center infrastructure within his transmission region.¹⁵ In 2025, data centers added an estimated \$9.3 billion in additional costs for ratepayers in PJM region, which spans all or parts of 13 mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states and the District of Columbia.¹⁶

The Solution: Infrastructure that powers AI cannot be built or operated at the expense of public health, energy costs, or the environment. Effective oversight requires both transparency into AI’s environmental impacts and strong guardrails for the physical infrastructure powering it — allowing the public to hold data center operators accountable to the communities in which they operate. Senator Markey has proposed the following legislation:

- ***AI Environmental Impacts Act:*** The *AI Environmental Impacts Act* would require companies to report the energy and environmental effects of AI data centers in a standardized way, allowing regulators and the public to better understand the technology’s consequences for the energy system, our health, and our environment.
- ***Protecting Communities from Data Center Impacts Act:*** This legislation would require data centers to receive a certificate of public interest from the federal government that affirms the data center has met minimum standards for energy, environmental, and

economic impacts, separate from any state and local permitting processes, and would provide resources to states, tribes, and localities to monitor and address negative impacts in air quality, water quality, and noise pollution. The bill would also require data centers to commit to demand flexibility in order to support grid reliability; commit to high labor standards; pay for whatever new grid infrastructure they require; and bring new clean energy and storage to meet their capacity needs, either on the grid, on-site, or through contributions to a distributed energy fund.



6. SHARING THE AI WEALTH

The Threat: AI is not only transforming technology. It is creating enormous private wealth for the executives, investors, and shareholders positioned to profit from the AI boom. Recent proposed public offerings by leading AI companies have made this reality impossible to ignore. As companies such as Anthropic and OpenAI move toward the public markets with potential valuations approaching or reaching \$1 trillion, the financial upside of AI is becoming clearer: a small number of founders, executives, venture capitalists, and early investors could receive extraordinary windfalls from a technology that depends on workers, consumers, public infrastructure, and enormous environmental resources. Without a fair tax system, the gains from AI will be concentrated at the top while the public bears many of the costs.

The Human Cost: The AI boom is already creating winners and losers. A warehouse worker whose productivity is tracked by an algorithm, a customer service representative worried their job will be automated, or a family paying higher electricity bills because of a nearby data center may never see a dime from the trillion-dollar valuations AI companies are chasing. But executives, venture capitalists, and early investors could walk away with life-changing fortunes. That is the imbalance at the heart of the AI economy: working people are being asked to absorb the disruption, surveillance, and costs of AI while the largest financial rewards flow to those already wealthy enough to own the companies building it.

The Solution: The AI economy should not become another engine for inequality. If artificial intelligence creates massive new wealth, the wealthiest beneficiaries should pay their fair share just like working people do. Senator Markey has proposed the following legislation:

- ***Equal Tax Act:*** The *Equal Tax Act* would tax investment income at the same rate as ordinary labor income for individuals making more than \$1 million. The bill would limit preferential tax rates for long-term capital gains and dividends, end the stepped-up basis loophole, restrict the use of like-kind exchanges by the ultra-wealthy, and limit the pass-through deduction for high-income individuals. By closing loopholes that reward wealth over work, the *Equal Tax Act* would ensure that the people who profit most from the AI boom pay their fair share.



CONCLUSION

Big Tech companies stand to make billions of dollars on AI. **The AI Accountability Agenda** starts with a clear principle: AI should serve the public interest, not pad Big Tech's profits. Senator Markey's bills put that principle into practice by giving workers power against automated management and surveillance; protecting children and teenagers from exploitative AI systems; defending civil rights from discriminatory algorithms; preserving human judgment in healthcare; requiring accountability for the energy and environmental impacts of data centers; and ensuring that the wealth generated by AI does not flow only to billionaires, executives, and investors. Taken together, these proposals offer a comprehensive framework for ensuring that AI expands opportunity without sacrificing privacy, civil rights, worker power, environmental justice, patient safety, tax fairness, and democratic accountability.

That framework is only possible if democratic governments retain the power to act. Over the past few years, the tech industry and its billionaire leaders have mounted an aggressive campaign to block states from regulating AI. That strategy reached Congress through the proposed 10-year state AI regulation moratorium in the Republican budget reconciliation bill and later appeared in President Trump's executive order seeking to limit state AI regulation. Both proposals threatened states' ability to protect their residents at the very moment when AI harms were becoming more visible. Senator Markey assembled a robust coalition to defeat these efforts, but the fight revealed the industry's broader goal: when companies cannot defeat AI safeguards on the merits, they try to prevent democratic governments from adopting them in the first place.

Congress shouldn't stop states from regulating AI — it should meet them in action. Senator Markey's proposals advance a simple idea: the future of AI should not be decided behind closed doors by the companies directly profiting from it. It should be shaped through democratic oversight, public accountability, and enforceable protections for the people and communities most affected by this technology. AI can meaningfully expand what is possible, but only if Congress puts people before profits and ensures that this technology delivers for the American people.

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³ Alexander Rossell Hayes, *Most Americans Say AI Development Is Moving Too Fast and Twice as Many Are AI Pessimists as AI Optimists*, YouGov (May 12, 2026), <https://yougov.com/en-us/articles/54762-most-americans-say-artificial-intelligence-ai-development-moving-too-fast-twice-as-many-ai-pessimists-as-ai-optimists-may-9-11-2026-economist-yougov-poll>.

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⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Bhaskar Chakravorti et al., *Will Wired Belts Become the New Rust Belts?: AI and the Emerging Geography of American Job Risk*, Digital Planet at Tufts University (2026), <https://digitalplanet.tufts.edu/ai-and-the-emerging-geography-of-american-job-risk-page/>.

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