



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Governor's Press Office, ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov

Governor Shapiro's Remarks as Prepared for Delivery at the AI Horizons 2026 Summit

Pittsburgh, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** delivered remarks on the need for strict guardrails in the rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence (AI) during the [AI Horizons 2026 Summit](#).

See below for the Governor's remarks as prepared for delivery:

Thank you.

Thank you all for being here – and thank you Joanna for the work you've done again and again through the AI Strike Team to convene industry leaders for important conversations like this one.

I've joined you at this conference each year as Governor to talk about the future of artificial intelligence because it has been clear to me for years that this technology has the potential to reshape our society in really profound ways.

Just last year, here on this stage, I talked about the promise and possibility of AI and what that means for Pennsylvania.

I talked about how AI can create efficiencies, better health outcomes, and assist workers in their daily tasks if it is developed in a responsible, ethical way.

I still believe that opportunity exists – but as the events of the past several weeks have made even clearer, we cannot ignore the warning signs, nor downplay the risks.

But what's changed in the last year?

For one, the capabilities of this technology have advanced significantly...

And second, the technology is now starting to improve itself, oftentimes escaping the controls of its human developers.

More people are using artificial intelligence than ever before.

Earlier today I was with a plumber who told me that he uses AI to improve his plumbing business.

At the same time he also told me he's scared about the future direction of it.

He understands instinctively what's being talked about in these halls today – the pace of development of the frontier models is getting exponentially faster...

And now, the leading companies developing these tools say they can't guarantee the public is safe from them.

We've learned about AI agents forming their own cliques, developing their own language, and trying to mislead their human developers while hacking into other companies' networks on their own, most notably Hugging Face earlier this year.

And just yesterday, OpenAI reported six additional instances in just the last six months of these agents acting outside their control.

We've heard warnings about how these tools could be used by bad actors to build biological weapons or to surveil and suppress political opponents.

All the while, leaders in our federal government refuse to put in place any guardrails to ensure this technology is used responsibly – whether out of willful ignorance or personal greed.

I want to be clear: I am not a doomer. I don't think it is inevitable that AI is going to take over the world or that someone will misuse it to kill us or do harm.

But I do have real concerns, as do many Pennsylvanians and many Americans.

And I don't think the very real concern they overwhelmingly express about this technology is a "hoax," as our president has called it.

The leading companies in this space, and some who are here today, have openly talked about what could happen if this technology falls into the wrong hands and how more and more their own hands can't fully guide and shape it.

The fear and confusion that everyday Americans have is understandable, and it needs to be addressed comprehensively with a focus on responsible, safe, and ethical uses of this extraordinary technology.

Here in Pennsylvania, we're uniquely situated to be a leader in this conversation.

We've got world-class research institutions like Carnegie Mellon, Pitt, Penn, and Penn State where some of the smartest minds have been thinking about these issues for years.

We've got business leaders, organized labor, and community leaders all getting together around the table at convenings like this one to have hard conversations and collaborate with one another.

And you have a Governor and a Commonwealth that is ready to engage on these tough issues.

I know there are many companies and researchers – including many here in this room – who are working on AI technology that has the potential to do a lot of good in the world.

Some are already improving people's lives.

Companies and researchers who are deploying this technology to solve real problems in the life sciences, in agriculture, in infrastructure, and many other fields.

Take my friend Jake Loosararian, for example.

He founded Gecko Robotics here in Western Pennsylvania and he's using AI embedded in his robots to inspect critical infrastructure like power plants to ensure they're safe and operating efficiently.

He's helping keep our communities safe and ensure that when we flip a switch in our house, the lights actually turn on.

He built that company with \$10,000 in seed funding from our Commonwealth and turned it into a \$1 billion enterprise based right here in the Steel City, with hundreds of employees.

Here's another example: The Human Engineering Research Labs at Pitt are using AI to develop a wheelchair with a robotic arm that can do everything from open doors to carry a beverage – giving folks with limited mobility real independence.

And let me give you one more: Philadelphia-based company Burro is using AI to build autonomous robots that can help farm workers haul produce more quickly, safely, and efficiently – getting more food on Pennsylvanians' plates faster.

Those are just three examples of companies and researchers who are responsibly and ethically utilizing the promise of this technology to create opportunities, not limit them.

Three organizations that are using their brain power and their vision to deliver tangible benefits to other people.

We need to ensure this technology benefits all Pennsylvanians – and doesn't just enrich the people who build it.

Unfortunately, too many companies aren't using these technologies ethically or responsibly – either because of purposeful actions or because they've lost control of what they started to build.

They're focused on winning the race, developing the next model, or growing at scale above all else – and not always paying attention, or caring, about the negative consequences.

Let me give you an example of a company we've encountered here in Pennsylvania that is using this technology in ways that harm other people.

The use of AI companion bots is growing rapidly.

In fact, 30% of teens across the country report using an AI companion bot every day.

But this space is entirely unregulated.

We've read stories about these chatbots telling kids to hurt others – or even themselves.

And so we investigated through our Department of State who oversees this type of work.

Within just a few minutes, our investigators, using their official email addresses, were connected with a chat bot – Emilie – who claimed to be an expert in psychology or psychiatry and quickly dispensed medical advice.

The chat bot even presented a bogus medical license number in Pennsylvania, presenting itself as a licensed medical provider.

That is against the law – and my Administration is suing [Character.AI](#) to stop it.

But we can't just do this retroactively and wait for people to get hurt or wait for these companies to break the law.

We need to put proactive measures in place and establish responsible regulations to prevent this kind of thing happening in the first place.

In fact, that's what we've been doing since my first few months in office, when I signed an executive order establishing key principles and setting up real guardrails governing how Pennsylvania uses generative AI.

Those principles – respecting privacy, ensuring safety and security, promoting fairness, increasing accuracy, and empowering our employees – have continued to guide every decision we've made about AI use in state government.

At the same time, we established partnerships with CMU and Penn to tap into their networks of experts and researchers to develop proactive, forward-looking policy.

We launched an AI pilot in state government that was grounded in our values and shaped by sound policy.

We engaged our labor leaders and Commonwealth employees to get their buy in – and we ensured everyone using this technology had the proper training.

And through that, we sped up government, and we did so in a responsible, ethical manner.

As a result, our state employees found these tools exceptionally useful.

We eliminated backlogs, sped up permitting, and our employees reported saving 95 minutes per day using them.

Pennsylvania has been a model for safe and effective AI deployment to our Commonwealth employees from the beginning.

But I'm mindful that we're just one state – and despite our commitment to collaboration and the leadership of folks in this room and in this region – we can't address this alone.

It's going to require national and in fact, international, leadership and collaboration.

I've called on the federal government to step up and regulate the AI industry – just like they do for nearly every other industry that significantly impacts our lives.

Think about it: We don't let pharmaceutical companies develop drugs and put them right out on the market – they must first go through the FDA to prove they're safe and effective.

And, we don't let aircraft manufacturers make an airplane and put commercial passengers on it right off the assembly line – the FAA sets strict standards that must be met before the first flight.

AI shouldn't be treated any differently.

Particularly because it has the power to impact people's lives in such dramatic ways.

We need the federal government to establish strict rules of the road – and then enforce those rules to ensure a level playing field.

Rules that require independent, third-party oversight of frontier models; increase transparency into the development of these models; and prioritize safety above all else.

The future of a technology this powerful should be shaped by the American people and their representatives.

And while information from industry leaders is helpful and welcome, they should not exclusively guide the regulatory policy of this nation.

The federal government needs to work with leading researchers and experts – as we've done in Pennsylvania – and with the American people to develop strict guardrails on this technology, its development, and its deployment in the real world.

I recognize that is hard.

But we elect our leaders to take on the hardest problems, not give up at the first sight of difficulty.

Speaker Mike Johnson and too many in Congress are content to do nothing, instead blaming others for their lack of leadership or saying they don't have the expertise to act.

Think of this: just days after the leaders of all these companies issued apocalyptic warnings, Mike Johnson adjourned the House of Representatives last night, weeks earlier than originally scheduled, so members could go home and campaign instead of staying in Washington and doing their jobs.

He has abdicated his responsibility to lead at a time when we cannot afford weakness and retreat.

By the time Congress comes back into session after the election, we could be dealing with a whole new generation of generative AI, and more scary examples of AI agents going rogue.

But there's something in between accelerating and ignoring what's on the road ahead...

And slamming on the brakes and refusing to move forward.

It's a false choice to say that our only two options are to do what Donald Trump is saying: that we should ignore the risks and go full steam ahead –

Or, on the other hand, completely stop work on AI development indefinitely.

There is a better, more thoughtful way.

That's what we have to work toward.

Strong federal action is the first step – but this issue, and this technology, can't be contained within our national borders.

I've said before, and believe to this day, we need to beat China on AI.

I believe that because I trust American workers with democratic ideals to develop these technologies more responsibly than developers in communist China.

But the idea that we have to choose between protecting our people from the risks posed by AI and winning the race against China is wrong.

That is another false choice.

Because the way we both win on AI and protect the American people in the process is to build international consensus around this technology and its use, to establish common protections for our citizens and a level playing-field for our companies at home and abroad.

We should work with our allies and our adversaries to put these protections in place.

That might mean placing limits on technology sharing and slowing down frontier AI development until we can be sure these systems are safe.

And while China may complain that we're "fear-mongering," both our countries have a mutual interest in getting this right and ensuring we don't lose control of this technology.

Unfortunately, when you isolate yourself as the Trump Administration has done to our country over the past several years, it becomes harder to build that necessary international consensus.

And while Donald Trump talks a big game about beating China on AI development, his Administration cut a deal to sell some of our most advanced chips to Chinese companies, giving them a leg up over American entrepreneurs.

That is a mistake.

Real leadership means keeping America ahead of China in AI innovation, pushing Beijing on practical guardrails to reduce risks to the American people, and putting effective safety measures in place here at home.

It's time for the Trump Administration to stop alienating our allies, starting wars that destabilize our world, and damaging our credibility in foreign capitals...

And start leading the conversation on how we can mobilize countries around the world to join us in responsibly regulating AI.

That should start next week, when President Xi visits the United States.

This should be among the top items on President Trump's meeting agenda.

I, for one, hope President Trump will leave the bluster and showmanship at the door and engage proactively and responsibly on this issue that is critical to our nation's future.

For my part, I will be leading the conversation here in Pennsylvania around the safe, responsible use of AI.

And I'm here today to respectfully ask everyone in this room to be part of that effort.

Let's build on the work happening here at this AI Horizons conference.

I know some of you are thinking that conversations about regulation will slow us down or undermine our competitive spirit or force us to make compromises.

But that's not the case.

The companies that will really succeed in the years to come won't be the ones that bet on the wild wild west...

They'll be the ones that understand that swift progress grounded in a commitment to responsible, ethical development is the answer.

I appreciate the concerns articulated by the CEOs of the leading AI labs – including several companies who are participating in this conference.

But we should be clear: some of those same companies have been calling for regulation in public while funding the groups fighting against it.

They don't get to claim the moral high ground by saying one thing publicly and doing another thing privately.

Because people can see right through that – they can tell a CEO is more concerned about their IPO than the impact their product is having on our kids, our families, and our communities.

To address the significant concerns people have with the AI industry, the folks in this room and folks in boardrooms in Silicon Valley need to take action, too.

You have a social responsibility and you need to walk the walk.

You need to show how your tech is helpful to real people – the way Jake at Gecko, Dr. Cooper at HERL ["hurl"], and the team at Burro have.

Participate in the regulatory process – help frame it, but don't fight it.

Invest in the advancements that make people's lives better.

Operate transparently, and make safety your first priority.

Focus on creating outcomes that are going to solve problems, keep people healthy, make inefficient systems work better, and otherwise improve people's lives...

And do that in an ethical, responsible way that protects jobs and doesn't eliminate them.

That should be our primary mission – not crossing the tape first.

This is not a moment when we can walk away from hard conversations or emerging technology.

We can't kick the can down the road anymore.

And I chose to come back here today because I believe this group has a lot to offer the national conversation.

In this room we have experts in technology, in business, in academia, and in government.

We've shown that we can come together as a community and work responsibly.

And while the federal government quite literally walked away from the table this week, we need to step up and be a model for the rest of the nation and force them to come back.

I'm not asking you to do charitable work.

This isn't a convening of nonprofits.

Everyone in this room can be successful with this technology –

But the people who will lead this future field – the companies that will earn the trust of the people of Pennsylvania – are the ones who do this the right way...

Who abide by responsible guardrails, who prioritize safety, and who use this extraordinarily powerful tool to make a difference in people's lives.

If you go back and look at the commercial history of Pittsburgh, it's filled with companies who helped solve problems and staked their reputation on doing what's right.

We gather here today to talk about the frontier of innovation, but 157 years ago this July, another technological pioneer was founded in this city: the Westinghouse Air Brake Company.

George Westinghouse, one of the greatest inventors of his time, built his company to solve a problem that he witnessed with his own eyes:

Westinghouse saw two runaway trains heading right toward each other.

Their engineers tried to stop them – but they couldn't brake in time.

He saw that crash, he reacted, and he invented new brakes to stop trains that would ultimately be used on locomotives all across the country.

He built an incredibly successful company.

And he did so by treating people with dignity and respect.

At a time when his fellow industrialists were busting strikes and undermining workers' rights, Westinghouse gave its workers more benefits and more protections.

He judged himself not on how much money he made or how many inventions he patented, but whether his work "contributed something to the welfare and happiness" of humanity.

It is in that spirit that we must address these challenging questions.

We must work together – like we always have here in Western Pennsylvania.

It's part of our DNA to build trust, to establish responsible guardrails, and to ensure this technology is safe and benefits us all.

Western Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh can lead the way, and we can serve as a model for the rest of the country and the world.

People are counting on us and now is our time.

Thank you.

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