

Landscape and Considerations for Pride 2025

As of February 28, 2025

Background

In the first 100 days of his administration, President Trump has acted swiftly to fulfill campaign promises to dismantle DEI initiatives within both the federal government and the private sector. Within this, the administration has directly targeted the LGBTQ+ community with an emphasis on transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, with executive orders [enforcing a gender binary](#), [rolling back Biden-era protections](#), [eliminating DEI initiatives](#), and [restricting care for children](#). This focused effort to roll back rights and halt what has been meaningful progress has led to a sharp increase in provocative and dangerous rhetoric, Federal agency actions that threaten the safety of LGBTQ+ employees, state legislation threatening existing civil rights protections for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, and an increased microscope on private sector engagement in LGBTQ+ issues from internal policies to external activations.

Opponents of LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion overwhelmingly focus their advocacy efforts on the transgender community, which makes up less than 1% of the American population and bears the brunt of anti-LGBTQ policy and rhetoric from executive orders on [trans individuals in women's sports](#), as well as legislation introduced under the premise of protecting [women's intimate spaces](#) like bathrooms and locker rooms. In addition to action from the executive branch, the Supreme Court has heard oral arguments in two cases directly implicating the LGBTQ+ community. The first, *U.S. v. Skrametti*, is a pending case regarding whether a Tennessee law can prohibit certain gender affirming medical care for minors. The second case, *Ames v. Ohio Department of Youth Services*, involves a discrimination claim in which a straight woman alleges she was demoted and replaced by a less experienced gay man. Oral arguments have not yet been scheduled for *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, which focuses on the right to opt out of public-school instruction on gender and sexuality.

At the state level, there are [currently 456 bills](#) that could impact the LGBTQ+ community. Proposed measures cover issues including healthcare, government identification, LGBTQ+ representation in school, and public accommodation. Most recently, [Iowa lawmakers passed a bill](#) that would end state civil rights protections for transgender individuals, making Iowa the first state to remove such broad and explicit protections.

The combination of executive orders, agency directives, state-level actions, intense rhetoric and increased litigation has contributed to significantly to heightened visibility for corporate brands engaging LGBTQ+ advocacy or community engagement, creating internal spaces for LGBTQ+ employees and participating in external moments like Pride.

General Guidance

It is critical to remember that while their identity has been politicized, LGBTQ+ communities exist within every company, community and customer segment and make up a critical customer and

employee base across industries. Given the politicized landscape, it is critical to assess various risks, create employee and community safety plans and make informed decisions both on activities and amplification strategies. Companies need to understand the polarized viewpoints of consumers and internal audiences, where these groups stand and what the near and long-term implications are of any decision. Decisions must be rooted in an understanding of core stakeholder audiences and what level of push-back the brand is prepared to withstand. Regardless of the final decision, organizations are likely to receive some level of negative feedback and need to be prepared to stay the course on a decision or face the heightened reputational risk that comes with back peddling.

At a high level, we recommend these proactive actions:

- **Audit your existing engagement** with the LGBTQ+ community and equity initiatives, including your company's ERG, any partnerships with LGBTQ+ nonprofits, company policies that encourage LGBTQ+ equity e.g. pronoun recognition, etc.
- **Conduct a risk assessment** based on values, history of communications internally and externally on DEI in this environment, expectations of stakeholders and risk appetite. While it is helpful to understand what your peers are doing, risk assessments should be inherently custom to your organization and factor in your own starting and desired end points.
- **Make a clear decision with rationale** that you can defend, set on a foundation of your values, priorities, and history of engagement with the community. Be prepared to proactively communicate with transparency.
- **Draft internal and external position statements** and ensure organizational alignment and comfort with the language before making a final decision.
- **Consider communicating with LGBTQ+ ERG leaders** directly and engaging them in conversations and decision-making, particularly if you are considering a significant departure from how you have typically engaged.
- **Prioritize employee safety** and have a protection plan in place for any in-person activations at Pride events that employees will staff. In addition to the external considerations, organizations should be aware of internal risks and threats to employee safety in this environment and the potential for leaks of ERG membership or conflict on internal communication channels.

What We're Watching

Government Directives on Cultural heritage Months

While the White House executive orders and some agency directives have made efforts to clarify that recognizing cultural heritage months is permissible, the broader ambiguity of DEI directives and disparate approaches across federal agencies has led to an environment of ambiguity that can be challenging to navigate for the private sector. At this stage, recognizing and celebrating cultural heritage months remains legally permissible as long as engagement is not mandatory.

- The White House signed a [proclamation recognizing February as Black History Month](#)

- A Feb. 5 U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) memo from Attorney General Pam Bondi on the DOJ's response to the EOs said the memo "is intended to encompass programs, initiatives, or policies that discriminate, exclude, or divide individuals based on race or sex. It does not prohibit educational, cultural, or historical observances—such as Black History Month, International Holocaust Remembrance Day [Jan. 27], or similar events—that celebrate diversity, recognize historical contributions, and promote awareness without engaging in exclusion or discrimination."
- [Google](#) removed references to Pride Month and other cultural observances from its calendar app.
- The [Defense Intelligence Agency \(DIA\)](#) and [Department of Defense \(DoD\)](#) announced a pause in heritage month observances.
- The State Department [continues to celebrate various heritage and history months](#), recognizing the contributions of diverse communities to the nation.
- Some organizations and leaders have expressed concerns about these changes. For example, [religious leaders](#) have responded to the federal government's removal of cultural observances, emphasizing the importance of standing up for marginalized groups.

Early Corporate Signals on Pride 2025

Any internal or external engagement on Pride in 2025 is likely to be received as a statement affirming DEI commitments by audiences and stakeholders on all sides of the issue. Much like with broader decisions on DEI in this environment, brands and companies must center their values, reputation and risk appetite in decision making. We anticipate a heightened spotlight on pride activations, statements, sponsorships, product marketing and internal initiatives that will lead to increased visibility and scrutiny. For brands that have historically heavily or publicly engaged in Pride activities - particularly those that advance business objectives (i.e. product marketing, advertising, etc.) - stakeholders will be watching to see whether actions this year create conflict between supporting and profiting from the LGBTQ+ community. At the same time, we see brands balancing a need for a productive relationship with this administration and public engagement on issues that can threaten license to operate amidst regulatory, policy and broader political uncertainty.

In the height of private sector DEI roll-backs in late 2024 and early 2025, many brands included signals of dampened engagement in Pride and broader LGBTQ+ advocacy or community engagement:

- [Lowe's](#) announced it will stop sponsoring and participating in events, such as festivals and parades, that are outside of its business areas.
- [Target](#) has faced consumer backlash after reducing its Pride-themed merchandise, no longer participating in the HRC corporate equality index and adding additional review processes to corporate sponsorships to ensure alignment to business objectives.
- [Walmart](#) said it will better monitor its third-party marketplace to make sure items sold there do not include products aimed at LGBTQ+ minors, including chest binders intended for transgender youth. The company will continue to award grants, disaster relief, and funding to events such as Pride parades, but with more guidelines on how funding can be used.

- [Tractor Supply](#) stated that it would “stop sponsoring non-business activities” such as Pride festivals or voting campaigns.
- [PepsiCo’s](#) added processes to ensure that sponsorships align with the core business.
- In addition to tighter control of sponsorships and partnerships, a host of brands have proactively announced they are no longer participating in HRC’s Corporate Equality Index, a benchmarking tool to assess corporate policies and practices related to LGBTQ+ workplace equality:
 - [Warner Bros. Discovery](#)
 - [Walmart](#)
 - [Target](#)
 - [PepsiCo](#)
 - [McDonald’s](#)
 - [Toyota Motor Company](#)
 - [Caterpillar Inc](#)
 - [Ford Motor Company](#)
 - [Harley-Davidson](#)
 - [Lowe’s](#)
 - [Molson Coors](#)
 - [Tractor Supply Co.](#)
 - [John Deere](#)
 - [Brown-Forman](#)

We have also seen [brands double down on their commitment to DEI](#), with company executives including Jamie Dimon ([JPMorgan](#)) and Tarang Amin ([e.l.f. Beauty](#)) broadly alluding to a continuation of LGBTQ+ activities. Additionally, [Urban Adventures Companies](#) is strengthening its commitment to the LGBTQ+ community with the launch of the WorldPride Donation Match fundraiser, pledging to match up to \$100,000 in donations to support Capital Pride Alliance’s GivePride365 initiative. While we have not yet begun to see proactive affirmations of Pride activations and engagement from corporate brands, we can anticipate that those with a history of engagement will continue to do so.

World Pride in Washington, DC

Amidst the tenuous anti-LGBTQ+ environment, Washington D.C. is slated to host [WorldPride’s](#) global Pride celebrations this spring, marking the 50th anniversary of Pride observances in the nation’s capital. Industry experts are [closely watching the Trump administration’s response](#) to both WorldPride celebrations and additional activations around the cultural event, which has already driven media headlines following [corporate sponsors](#) and [charity partners](#) retracting their participation. We expect that this landscape will continue to evolve in the lead up to the event and anticipate heightened engagement from multiple perspectives.

- Consulting firm [Booz Allen Hamilton](#) withdrew its corporate sponsorship, indicating that the decision “does not reflect any pullback of support to this community” and contextualizing the announcement alongside continued commitment to “support all employee communities and celebrate tribute months”. Booz Allen Hamilton has separately commented on their status as a federal contractor and needing to modify programs to protect their eligibility for contracts.

- o Booz Allen’s withdrawal as a corporate sponsor received news coverage from outlets including the Washington Post, Politico and the Washington Blade.
- [Egale Canada](#), a prominent LGBTQ+ advocacy group, announced in a [statement](#) on February 6, 2025, that it would not participate in any U.S.-hosted LGBTQ+ events this year, citing safety issues and policy decisions under President Trump’s administration. The Egale Canada statement marks the first known time that an international LGBTQ+ rights organization has declared it will not come to the U.S. to attend WorldPride because of the controversial policies adopted by the Trump-Vance administration.
- The [Kennedy Center](#) has removed a highly anticipated National Symphony Orchestra concert celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride from its website. The event, “A Peacock Among Pigeons: Celebrating 50 Years of Pride,” was scheduled for May 21–22 as part of the center’s acknowledgment of WorldPride 2025 in Washington, D.C. A centerpiece of the Kennedy Center’s Conflux initiative—its flagship social impact partnership program—the concert was designed to celebrate LGBTQ+ identity and visibility through music.

Beyond WorldPride, Pride events in major hubs around the world are being impacted by the US environment:

- Google and [Meta](#) withdrew their respective sponsorships from Sydney’s Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, citing cost and strategy realignments.
- [Pride Toronto](#) lost funding from three unnamed major corporate sponsors operating in both the U.S. and Canada who are distancing themselves from LGBTQ+ support to avoid potential retaliation from the current U.S. administration.

Pride Activation Scenario Planning

Below we have outlined a series of likely potential scenarios surrounding private sector engagement in Pride 2025 alongside considerations. We strongly encourage brands to undergo scenario planning that takes into account your history of engagement, stakeholders, values, reputation and risk appetite. APCO is working with many clients to scenario plan already and can support informed decision-making.

Potential Scenario	Consideration
Conservative media publishes list of companies engaging in DC Pride/Pride more broadly and positions as a target for boycotts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company would need to be prepared to defend their participation • Could increase visibility for retribution from the Administration
Media calls out companies that traditionally participated in DC pride that pulled out this year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company would need to be prepared to defend their lack of participation • Increased internal questioning of values

<p>Employees and customers celebrate and commend participation as evidence that values come first, despite fear of controversy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could increase visibility of participation, regardless of formal plans to amplify • Company would need to be prepared to defend their participation
<p>Continued coverage of tensions between WorldPride and administration (e.g. Kennedy Center event) draws attention to its sponsors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could increase visibility of participation, regardless of formal plans to amplify • Company would need to be prepared to defend their participation • Could increase visibility for retribution from the Administration
<p>Visibility of DC Pride/World Pride in Washington draws negative commentary from the administration, inclusive of company mentions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company would need to be prepared to defend their participation • Could increase visibility for retribution from the Administration
<p>Threat of counter-protests from groups known to turn to violence or harassment rises, covered by media and amplified across social</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company could need to shift course, requiring conversations with employees • Company could need to offer more protections for employees who choose to attend and staff company activations
<p>Violence or disruption at a Pride celebration affects employees (e.g. employees participating in an in-person presence at Pride such as a booth or a float are harassed or injured)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company would need to be prepared to defend their participation retroactively, especially to their employees • Company could be contacted by media for statement • Company could be discouraged from future activations by its employees, which could be challenging or demoralizing for employees
<p>Increased attention to ERG's poses a security risk for organization's members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company needs to have protection measures in place to secure sensitive information about employees • Company should establish an internal communications plan to check in and reassure employees
<p>Decision to disengage or pull sponsorships lead to internal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company would need to think about implications beyond Pride to other cultural

<p>conflict with values and increase in media attention</p>	<p>months and address conflicts that question values or lack of equity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Company could see an increase in support or mentions within conservative social spaces
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