



Southwest Airlines

Locations: Texas (HQ)
Industries: Transportation

RISK LEVEL:



High Risk

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DESCRIPTION:

Southwest Airlines is High Risk. The company yields to political activism in shaping corporate governance, potentially alienating consumers, dividing employees, and harming shareholders. The company implements race and identity-based policies that replace merit, excellence, and integrity with preferential treatment and outcomes. Southwest Airlines embraces corporate initiatives that redirect its central focus from business goals to partisan policies and divisive issues. This approach fails to safeguard free exercise, free speech, and free enterprise.

Corporate Weaponization

Has canceled customers, suppliers, or vendors due to their political views or religious beliefs OR corporately boycotts, divests, or sanctions regions, people groups, or industries. High Risk

A jury awarded a flight attendant a victory over Southwest and the Transportation Workers Union of America after she claimed she had been fired in 2017 for her pro-life views and criticizing the union for supporting pro-abortion protests (1)(2). The company complied with the federal vaccine mandate but did not appear to fire any employees and made accommodations for unvaccinated staff (3)(4). In October 2021, one of Southwest's pilots allegedly said a political slogan criticizing President Biden over a plane intercom. The pilot was not fired by Southwest (5). The company received a score of 100 on the 2025 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political stakeholder group. The company recruits employees based on sexual identity issues. Southwest Airlines discriminates against vendors that do not promote divisive sex and gender policies, indicating it prioritizes sexual issues over merit (5)(6).

Charitable giving (including employee matching programs) policies or practices discriminate against charitable organizations based on views or religious beliefs. High Risk

Southwest Airlines HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (1)(2). Southwest Airlines does not appear to discriminate against charitable organizations based on views or beliefs. The company focuses on funding organizations that support, "disaster relief, environmental sustainability, military families, and serious illness" (3). However, the company's e-pass ticket service for nonprofits excludes "religious endeavors." It is unclear if this provision extends to faith-based charities (4).

Employment policies fail to protect against viewpoint or other discrimination and/or are ideological in nature. High Risk

In May 2024, the American Alliance for Equal Rights filed a lawsuit against Southwest Airlines over discriminatory practices in awarding free flights to students (1). Southwest Airlines' HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company forces employees to attend multiple, controversial trainings on gender identity, sexual orientation, transgender issues, and divisive racial ideology. The company provides gender transition guidelines for its employees and a specific benefits guide with a comprehensive explanation of transgender services funded by the company (2)(3). In November 2023, America First Legal filed a letter with the EEOC requesting a civil rights investigation into Southwest Airlines over discriminatory practices in hiring. In December 2024, the company agreed to abandon its illegal DEI practices (4)(5)(6)(7). Southwest Airlines does not provide viewpoint protections for its employees (8).

Corporate Governance and Public Policy

Uses corporate reputation to support causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression. High Risk

Southwest Airlines HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company agrees to allow a controversial stakeholder group focused on sexual identity issues to dictate marketing or advertising strategy. By doing so, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). The company signed an open letter endorsing the Equality Act, a contentious proposal to amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act by adding sexual orientation and so-called gender identity as protected categories. The legislation would, among other implications, grant biological men access to women-only spaces such as sports teams and public restrooms, and compel healthcare providers to deliver sex-denying healthcare (3). The company also issued a statement broadly opposing state-level election security laws (4).

Uses corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression. High Risk

Southwest Airlines HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company covers transgender related costs for its employees and their children, including paid short-term leave, puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, chest surgeries, genital surgeries, medical visits and lab monitoring, travel and lodging. Additionally, the company has pledged philanthropic support of at least one organization or event that promotes sex and gender ideology. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company increases health care costs and risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). Southwest Airlines has partnerships with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) (3). The company is a corporate partner of the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (4). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of the company using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (5).

Uses corporate political actions and/or financial contributions for ideological, non-business purposes. High Risk

Southwest Airlines HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company publicly advocated for controversial sex and gender ideology through local, state or federal legislation or initiatives. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). The company has not used its PAC donations or lobbying for ideological purposes (3)(4)(5).

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