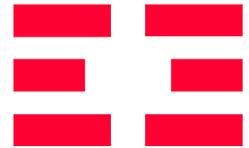


SIDLEY**Sidley Austin**

Locations: Illinois (HQ)

Industries: Legal

RISK LEVEL:**High Risk****DESCRIPTION:**

Sidley Austin 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. Sidley Austin 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

Sidley Austin received a score of 100 on the 2026 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political stakeholder group. The company recruits employees based on sexual identity issues. The company discriminates against vendors that do not promote divisive sex and gender policies, indicating it prioritizes sexual issues over merit (1)(2)(3). Sidley Austin terminated the employment of an associate one day after she posted an online letter on her personal blog about the Israel-Palestine conflict. The employee's letter noted that law firms were conflating critiques against Israel, its government, and its actions as anti-Semitic, which the employee believed would infringe upon free speech. The firm declined to comment on the matter (4)(5)(6)(7). Sidley Austin 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. The company discriminates against vendors that do not promote divisive sex and gender policies, indicating it prioritizes sexual issues over merit (8)(9).

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

Sidley Austin's HRC 2026 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (1)(2)(3). Sidley Austin's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (4)(5). The company does not appear to discriminate against charitable organizations based on views or beliefs (6).

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

Sidley Austin's HRC 2026 CEI rating indicates the company forces employees to attend at least one, controversial training 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 (1)(2)(3).

Sidley Austin's 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 (4)(5). Sidley Austin is a member of The Diversity and Flexibility Alliance, indicating its support of DEI in its recruitment, retention, promotions, and leadership composition (6)(7). The firm's Executive Committee Chair Michael J. Schmidtberger signed Catalyst's Champions for Change pledge, indicating its support of DEI in its leadership composition through the establishment of gender and racial targets (8)(9). Sidley Austin does not provide viewpoint protections for its employees (10).

Corporate Governance and Public Policy

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

High Risk

Sidley Austin's HRC 2026 CEI rating indicates the company potentially 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)(3). Sidley Austin's 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 (4)(5). Sidley Austin is committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 (6). The company's CEO, Michael J. Schmidtberger, signed the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion pledge, which includes a commitment to promote DEI through bias education training in the workplace, strategize on DEI programs/initiatives with other signatories, and engage boards of directors when developing and evaluating DEI strategies (7)(8).

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

High Risk

Sidley Austin's HRC 2026 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, lab monitoring, and mental health benefits. The company also covers at least five of the following services: reconstructive hair removal, cosmetic hair removal, tracheal shave or reduction, facial surgeries, voice modification surgery, voice modification therapy, lipoplasty or filling for body masculinization or feminization, and travel and lodging expenses. Additionally, the company has potentially 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)(3)(4). Sidley Austin provides a benefits package for employees that covers travel/lodging costs for an abortion and transgender medical procedures for covered employees and dependents, including children (5)(6)(7). The company's 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 (8)(9). In 2022, Sidley Austin claimed it would cover the cost of abortion and travel expenses in states banning it (10). Sidley Austin supports several LGBTQ+ Bar associations and offers pro bono services to LGBTQ+ related causes (11). The company is a corporate partner of Ashoka, a global network of entrepreneurs focused on widespread, systemic social and environmental change (12). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of Sidley Austin using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (13).

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

High Risk

Sidley Austin's 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). Sidley Austin has a pro bono partnership with the HRC to repeal legislation intended to protect parental rights, girls' sports, bathroom facilities, and gendered spaces (3)(4). The firm is a part of the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance, committed to work on initiatives that fight "systemic racism" (5)(6). Sidley Austin has not used its PAC donations for ideological purposes and has not reported on its lobbying (7)(8)(9).

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