



McDonald's

Locations: Illinois (HQ)

Industries: Food Beverage and Tobacco

RISK LEVEL:



Medium Risk

DESCRIPTION:

McDonald's often yields to political activism in shaping corporate governance, potentially alienating consumers, dividing employees, and harming shareholders. The company elevates merit, excellence, and integrity ahead of race and identity-based policies. McDonald's occasionally embraces corporate initiatives that redirect its central focus from business goals to partisan policies and divisive issues at times. 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. Medium Risk

McDonald's was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media, which aims to demonetize advertisements and suppress content that "vilifies" individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity, discusses "debated social issues in a negative or partisan context" or spreads "hate speech" (1)(2)(3). In 2012, the company canceled its partnership with the conservative nonprofit ALEC after coming under pressure from progressive groups (4).

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

McDonald's does not discriminate against charitable organizations based on views or beliefs. However, its employee matching program will only give to religious organizations that provide non-sectarian services (1)(2)(3). The company is a corporate partner of the Ronald McDonald House Charities and operates a separate scholarship fund (4)(5). McDonald's likely uses Benevity as its charitable giving platform. Benevity vets charities according to the Southern Poverty Law Center's Hate List, which includes mainstream libertarian, conservative, family, and religious advocacy organizations (6)(7)(8).

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

McDonald's used to support DEI through racial quotas, unconscious bias training, and executive compensation practices tied to DEI. In April 2023, America First Legal filed a letter with the EEOC requesting a civil rights investigation into the company over discriminatory practices in hiring. However, in January 2025, the company pledged to end racial quotas at the company and DEI training (1)(2)(3)(4)(5)(6)(7). The company 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.

Medium Risk

McDonald's had an extensive history of using its reputation to support divisive causes and scored a 100 out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign's 2023-2024 Corporate Equality Index. However, in January 2025, the company pledged to shift its corporate policies and practices back toward neutral. McDonalds pledged to stop filling out external surveys, which includes the CEI (1)(2). It 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). It is a member of the Civic Alliance, which opposes state election reform laws (4). The company's CEO Chris Kempczinski is a member of the Business Roundtable, which supports stakeholder capitalism over traditional shareholder obligations (5). Its CEO Chris Kempczinski signed the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion pledge, which includes a commitment to promote DEI through bias education training in the workplace (6)(7).

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

High Risk

McDonald's was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (1)(2)(3). The company pledged \$1 million to the Black Lives Matter movement and related causes, including the National Urban League (4)(5)(6). The company is a Bronze sponsor of Out and Equal and a partner of the HRC's Foundation (7)(8). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of the company using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (9).

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

High Risk

McDonald's donated to the Equality PAC but has not lobbied for ideological purposes (1)(2)(3).

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