

Risks Associated with HRC Corporate Partnership

1792

EXCHANGE

What is the Human Rights Campaign (HRC)?

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), functioning as a 501(c)(4), is the largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization in the United States. Founded as a political action committee in 1980 to support pro-LGBTQ+ candidates, it has since expanded into programs, research, campaigns, lobbying, and mobilization to support and advance pro-LGBTQ+ policies, legislation, and officials.¹

What does the HRC do?

- LGBTQ+ issue advocacy and lobbying for LGBTQ+ policy/legislation at federal, state, and local levels.²
- Electoral engagement aimed at mobilizing pro-LGBTQ+ voters/supporters to elect pro-LGBTQ+ leaders.³
- Institutional advocacy to advance LGBTQ+ policies/practices in major systems (including schools, workplaces, hospitals, and communities).⁴

Risks of Corporate Partnership

PARTISAN ALIGNMENT RISK

- HRC is a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization involved in lobbying and electoral activity advocating policy priorities aligned with the Democratic Party platform.⁵⁻⁷ Corporate sponsors have been accused of taking political sides through association.⁸
- HRC's endorsements overwhelmingly favor Democratic candidates, creating partisan perception.⁹
- HRC's affiliated PAC overwhelmingly funds Democratic candidates, including presidential candidates.¹⁰⁻¹²
- Corporate support for the HRC, particularly when not balanced by comparable support for organizations promoting conservative or traditional values, could be perceived as political side-taking.¹³

CONTROVERSIAL POLICY ADVOCACY

- HRC's advocacy extends beyond traditional nondiscrimination policies into highly contested areas of public policy, including ongoing policy debates related to transgender healthcare, sports participation, and access to sex-based facilities.^{14,15}
- HRC publishes advocacy-forward resources taking substantive positions on controversial public policy debates.¹⁶



REPUTATIONAL & STAKEHOLDER RISK

- Activist pressure campaigns have targeted HRC Corporate Partners.¹⁷
- Media coverage has linked companies to HRC advocacy.¹⁸
- Shareholders have criticized companies for their HRC Corporate Partnership.¹⁹
- Corporate logos frequently appear on HRC's website materials, events, and campaigns creating implicit brand alignment with HRC advocacy positions, even when companies intend only to support nondiscrimination initiatives.^{20,21}

MARKET & PEER RISK

- There is growing caution around corporate affiliation with politically engaged external organizations.²²
- Companies are increasingly withdrawing their HRC Corporate Partnership, with a 38% decrease in sponsorships over the last year.²³

27 companies have withdrawn their HRC corporate partnership in the last year, including: Barclays, Caesars Entertainment, Capital One, Cargill, Chevron, Citi, Comcast NBC Universal, Cox Enterprises, CVS, Danaher, Danone, Deloitte, Eaton, Exelon, Goldman Sachs, Google, Hershey, Intel, Johnson and Johnson, Lexus, NMG, Nordstrom, PepsiCo, PNC, Ross, T-Mobile, United Airlines, Visa, and Whirlpool.²⁴



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