



NAVIGATING THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE:

How Companies Decide When to Engage

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*Many thanks to the Center for Executive Succession
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Companies today increasingly feel pressured to take public positions on potentially divisive sociopolitical topics. Whether they choose to stay silent on these issues or weigh in, they face significant risk. The 2023 HR@Moore Survey of CHROs explored how companies typically go about making decisions in this arena, before focusing on how they responded to a specific issue – the Supreme Court’s recent *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* regarding abortion rights in the U.S.

The report shows that most companies have developed either formal or informal criteria to evaluate whether or not to take a public position on some politically or culturally divisive issue. The most important criteria focus on the extent to which the issue is aligned with the business’s strategy, values, and reputation. CHROs also indicated that employees seem to be the stakeholder group exerting the greatest pressure for companies to engage around divisive sociopolitical issues. Finally, most companies reported that they expect to stay the same or reduce the frequency with which they seek to engage publicly around controversial topics.

The *Dobbs v. Jackson* case provided a recent example of a concrete, high-profile issue that prompted many companies to engage, so we asked CHROs to report how they responded to the Supreme Court’s decision. Our results indicate that companies were far more likely to issue internal statements than external statements, and those statements often emphasized existing commitment to and resources for women’s health services. Companies that issued such responses most frequently did so within the first 3 days after the Supreme Court’s decision was announced, demonstrating a balance of commitment to this issue but with some caution. In contrast, external statements were either immediate, asserting these companies’ strong commitment to the issue, or delayed 4 or more days, perhaps signaling responses formulated in response to pressures placed on the company to say something.

The 2023 HR@Moore Survey of CHROs sought to examine how CEOs, CHROs, and organizations are attempting to thread the needle between accommodating employees and other stakeholder groups who want companies to be publicly vocal around sociopolitical issues while avoiding potential blowback from others who may be more reluctant. We explored how they go about deciding whether or not to take a stand, who is involved in the decision, and how they see these decisions going forward. In addition, we asked whether the need for CEOs to walk this tightrope is impacting the kinds of competencies being evaluated among potential successors. Finally, we explored the specifics of how companies responded to a recent sociopolitical issue with the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*.



Center for Executive Succession

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Thank you for your interest in our research.

To gain access to the full report, “**NAVIGATING THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: How Companies Decide When to Engage**” please contact CES@moore.sc.edu and provide your name, title, and company for which you work and we will send you the full report in PDF format.



Learn more about the [Center for Executive Succession](#) (CES) in the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina. Our corporate partners have *exclusive first access* to research conducted by the Center. We are celebrating 10 years of research excellence and now is the perfect time to join our growing roster of prestigious [corporate partners](#).

OUR PURPOSE

The Center for Executive Succession provides a forum for exploring and sharing experiences and learnings regarding executive succession, which is increasingly one of the board's top governance priorities. Our partners have the opportunity to contribute to sound research that challenges the status quo and is empirically driven to further the success of C-suite succession.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Center for Executive Succession is to be the objective source of knowledge about the issues, challenges and best practices regarding C-suite succession, and to advance the identification, development, selection and transition of executive and board talent.

CES seeks to appeal to board members, CEOs, CHROs and other C-suite members by providing state-of-the-art research and practice on executive succession. It does so through a) conducting innovative research projects, b) organizing interactive events, c) disseminating academic research findings, and d) delivering educational programs for all stakeholders engaged in executive succession. The corporate/academic collaboration between CES and its partner companies generates credible, unique and unbiased knowledge to further the effectiveness of executive succession practices in firms.

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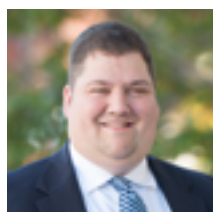
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The Center for Executive Succession serves as an independent, objective source of knowledge regarding C-suite succession practices. The center provides a forum for corporate leaders to shape the future direction of succession practices, which are increasingly one of the board's top governance priorities. Our partners have the opportunity to contribute to cutting-edge research that challenges the status quo and is empirically driven to further success in C-suite succession planning. For more information or to inquire about potential membership, please visit our website or contact us at sc.edu/moore/ces.

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DARLA MOORE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

The Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina is home to a world-class faculty and 13 major research centers. It is committed to educating leaders in global business and to playing a central role in the economic growth of the state by bringing the world to South Carolina and South Carolina to the world.

Founded in 1919, the Moore School has a history of innovative educational leadership, blending academic preparation with real-world experience through internships, consulting projects, study abroad programs and entrepreneurial opportunities. The Moore School has grown into a thriving site of academic excellence with an enrollment of more than 5,300 undergraduate students and more than 700 graduate students. The school offers a wide range of programs in nine undergraduate concentrations, seven master's degrees and two Ph.D. degrees as well as executive education programs and consulting services to the business community.

In 1998, the school was named for South Carolina native Darla Moore, making the University of South Carolina the first major university to name its business school after a woman.



Darla Moore School of Business

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