

September 2024

Project 2025: What's At Stake for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

What is Project 2025? It's a wish list of right-wing policies, reflecting an extreme Christian nationalist ideology, written by the Heritage Foundation and more than 100 other conservative groups as a blueprint for a potential conservative administration.

Project 2025 would take a whole-of-government approach to dismantling diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) and would turn civil rights enforcement on its head. Instead of protecting marginalized communities as intended, civil rights laws will be weaponized to exclude them from opportunities in both public and private life by:

- **Turning Civil Rights Enforcement Against Marginalized Communities:** The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division would be refashioned "to investigate and prosecute all state and local governments, institutions of higher education, corporations, and any other private employers" that could be engaging in DEIA practices. Project 2025 would use civil rights law to justify religious discrimination against women and LGBTQ+ people in public life, including the denial of reproductive health care. It would censor efforts to achieve DEIA in education and ensure books and curriculum reflect diverse student bodies. The Federal Trade Commission would even seek to enforce this in the private sector by targeting shareholders of companies who want DEIA or who market to diverse consumers.
- **Narrowing the Definition of Discrimination:** Project 2025 proposes to hide discrimination through redefinition, eliminating the disparate impact standard. This narrowing would mean that discrimination that is experienced through racial disparities would be swept under the rug and our civil rights laws would be blunted from providing protections in education, employment, and in other contexts. It also allows for discrimination against LGBTQ+ people by redefining protections provided by the Supreme Court.
- **Erasing Entire Communities:** Project 2025 intends to erase the very existence of communities by deleting the terms sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity — as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion — out of "every federal rule, agency regulation, contract, grant, regulation, and piece of legislation that exists."

- **Eliminating Civil Rights Enforcement Offices:** Project 2025 states that it would eliminate civil rights enforcement offices at the Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The result? Fewer or no resources to enforce privacy, discrimination, and other civil rights protections.
- **Undermining Data Collection, Thereby Undermining DEIA:** Project 2025 would undermine numerous efforts to collect demographic and civil rights data, thereby undermining the basis for DEIA. For example, it would prevent the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from collecting basic data on race and ethnicity discrimination and prevent the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from collecting data on gender identity.
- **Eliminating DEIA Efforts Throughout Government:** Project 2025 would seek to root out and dismantle any efforts at inclusion across government by eliminating DEIA offices in federal agencies, allowing for religiously motivated discrimination, and even treating past participation in DEIA initiatives as grounds for termination.
- **Attacking and Marginalizing Black Students, Native American students, LGBTQI Students, and Disabled Students:** Project 2025 explicitly seeks to make school less safe and welcoming for all students by undermining the civil rights of students who are Black, Native American, LGBTQI, disabled, or at the intersections of these identities.