

OUT LEADERSHIP RANKS THE MOST AND LEAST WELCOMING STATES DETAILING THE 4TH YEAR LGBTQ+ RIGHTS DECLINE ACROSS AMERICA

MASSACHUSETTS AND NEW YORK LEAD, ARKANSAS RANKS LAST, FLORIDA AND TEXAS SINK AND AMERICAN BUSINESSES MAY PAY THE PRICE

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Out Leadership](#) today released the 2026 [State LGBTQ+ Business Climate Index](#), an annual ranking measuring how hospitable each of the 50 U.S. states is for LGBTQ+ people to live, work, and do business — the go-to resource for corporate leaders assessing where to invest, hire, and manage risk. Scoring states across five categories — legal protections, youth and family support, political and religious attitudes, health access, and work environment — the Index is now in its eighth year.

“

Neutrality is not a viable position anymore. The fracture is too wide. The costs are too real. And the next generation of workers is watching.”

*Todd Sears, Founder & CEO of
Out Leadership*

This year's findings reveal a statistically divided nation. The national average has declined for the fourth consecutive year to 60.87 out of 100. The research reveals that the US is growing more polarized with the gap between America's most and least inclusive states now at 65 points — the widest ever. The moderate middle has collapsed according to the report.

"The top ten states have held steady or improved. The bottom ten have gotten meaningfully worse," said Todd Sears, Out Leadership's Founder and CEO. "The middle is disappearing. States are choosing sides."

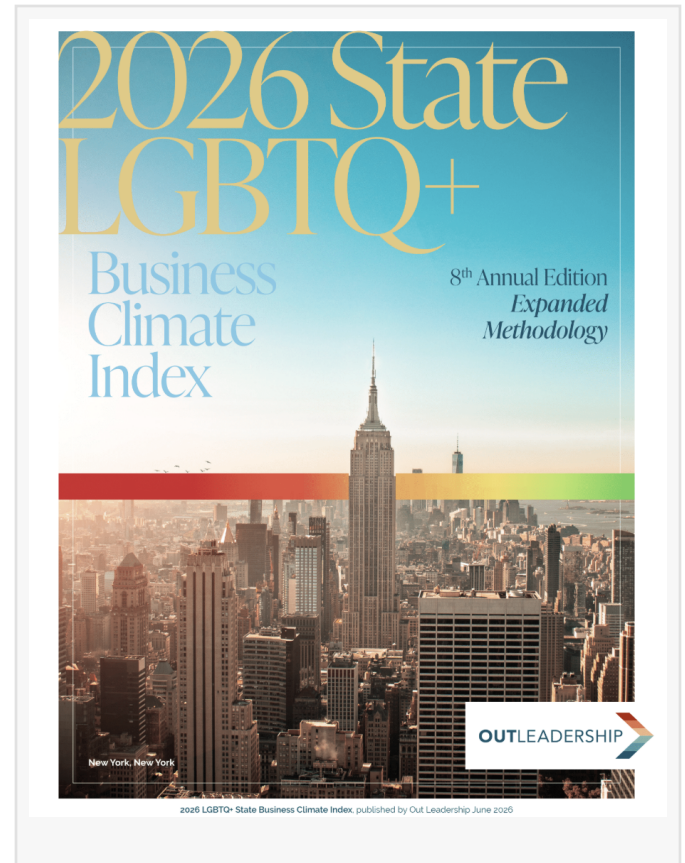
A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR A CHANGED LANDSCAPE

To reflect the political and social climate of 2026, Out Leadership expanded the Index this year to 32 indicators, adding 12 new measures— from bathroom bans and drag restrictions to anti-DEI mandates, library censorship, and adult gender-affirming care restrictions. A new Attorney General score also flags four AGs for targeting corporations over inclusive practices. The

Supreme Court's ruling in *Chiles v. Salazar*, which cast doubt on state conversion therapy bans nationwide, further changes the legal terrain.

WHO'S LEADING

Massachusetts tops the nation for the second consecutive year (93.23), followed by New York (92.92), Connecticut, New Jersey, and Illinois — states with comprehensive nondiscrimination protections, shield laws, and governors who have blocked hostile legislation. "When people feel safe and respected and empowered to be themselves, businesses grow stronger and our economy works better," said Governor Healey. Governor Pritzker of Illinois: "Our work is far from finished as the Trump administration continues to endanger the basic dignity of living authentically without fear. We will not back down." Governor Beshear of Kentucky, whose state improved despite a hostile legislature. "Kentucky's Republican supermajority put the nastiest piece of anti-trans, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in the country on my desk," he said, "and I vetoed it — because some things are worth losing over."



STATES WITH LOWER RANKINGS — AND WHY

Arkansas finishes last for the fourth consecutive year (28.06). The bottom five — Arkansas, Tennessee, Idaho, South Carolina, and Florida — have no statewide nondiscrimination protections. Transgender residents face barriers to healthcare and identity documents. Books reflecting LGBTQ+ lives have been pulled from school shelves. Workers can be fired for who they are with no legal recourse. Florida fell six positions to number 46. Texas fell three to number 39. States without nondiscrimination protections forgo approximately \$324 billion in annual GDP. Seventy-six percent of Gen Z workers say they won't take jobs in anti-equality states.

THE HIGH-TENSION PROBLEM

A new Corporate-Policy Alignment indicator classifies Texas, with 54 Fortune 500 headquarters in its state, Florida with 22, and Ohio with 27, as "High Tension"— states where government policy directly conflicts with their largest employers' own internal standards. "Over 100 companies now run internal policies that conflict with the laws of the states where they operate," Sears said. "States are manufacturing a compliance trap for their own employers, for no economic return."

WHY THIS INDEX EXISTS

"This is not about naming and shaming," Sears said. "Our goal is to help states do better." This year Out Leadership chose not to publish its member company logos, to protect them from retaliation now a genuine risk. For an organization that has spent fifteen years arguing visibility is

power, the blank page says something. "Neutrality is not a viable position anymore." Sears said. "The fracture is too wide. The costs are too real. And the next generation of workers is watching."

Manuel Gallegus

Out Leadership

+1 213-369-2598

manuel.gallegus@outleadership.com

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/916320387>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.