

# Iowa Erases ‘Gender Identity’ from Its Civil Rights Law: Employers Still Obligated Under Federal Title VII

By Catherine A. Cano, Michelle E. Phillips, Kenneth M. Wentz &

March 7, 2025

## Meet the Authors



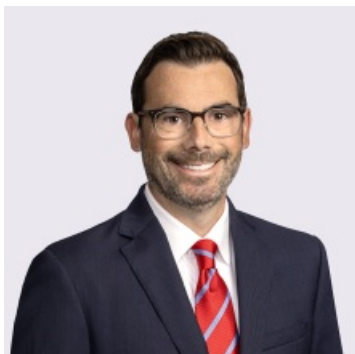
### Catherine A. Cano

Principal  
(402) 391-1991  
Catherine.Cano@jacksonlewis.com



### Michelle E. Phillips

(She/Her)  
Principal  
914-872-6899  
Michelle.Phillips@jacksonlewis.com



## Related link

- [Senate File 418](#)

The Iowa Legislature passed a bill ([Senate File 418](#)) removing “gender identity” as a protected characteristic under the Iowa Civil Rights Act. The Act prohibits discrimination in employment, education, housing, credit, and public accommodations. Governor Kim Reynolds signed the bill on Feb. 28, 2025, and the new law is effective July 1, 2025.

Although Iowa is ending state civil rights protections based on gender identity, employers should be mindful that gender identity remains a protected characteristic under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The bill expressly defines “male” and “female” and states that “sex should not be considered a synonym for gender identity.” Rather, the definitions of “male” and “female” are based on the sex assigned at birth. For purposes of state law, sex-based distinctions in line with these definitions are permitted in restrooms and locker rooms, among other places.

Iowa employers with at least 15 employees are covered by Title VII, which prohibits discrimination in employment. Gender identity remains a protected characteristic under Title VII, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County*. Some municipalities in Iowa also prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

Iowa employers should consult with counsel regarding necessary updates to policies and practices to ensure they align with federal, state, and municipal laws related to gender identity.

If you have questions about how the new Iowa law affects your business policies and practices, please contact a Jackson Lewis attorney.

## Kenneth M. Wentz

(Ken)

Office Managing Principal

(402) 391-1991

[Kenneth.Wentz@jacksonlewis.com](mailto:Kenneth.Wentz@jacksonlewis.com)

## Related Services

Corporate Diversity Counseling

Employment Litigation

National Compliance and Multi-

State Solutions

©2025 Jackson Lewis P.C. This material is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to constitute legal advice nor does it create a client-lawyer relationship between Jackson Lewis and any recipient. Recipients should consult with counsel before taking any actions based on the information contained within this material. This material may be considered attorney advertising in some jurisdictions. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome.

Focused on employment and labor law since 1958, Jackson Lewis P.C.'s 1,000+ attorneys located in major cities nationwide consistently identify and respond to new ways workplace law intersects business. We help employers develop proactive strategies, strong policies and business-oriented solutions to cultivate high-functioning workforces that are engaged and stable, and share our clients' goals to emphasize belonging and respect for the contributions of every employee. For more information, visit <https://www.jacksonlewis.com>.