

Editorial: DEI: Defunding Political Divisiveness and Discrimination

By Senator Steinmetz

There are a myriad of concerns among citizens across Wyoming regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs in our public institutions. What began as initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity have strayed far from their original purpose. Today, these programs promote division, undermine individual achievement, and stifle free speech - all at the expense of taxpayers and the values we hold dear in Wyoming.

This is why I am taking a strong stand by introducing legislation in 2025 to terminate and defund DEI programs, starting with the University of Wyoming and extending this effort to all public institutions across our state. My goal is to ensure that Wyoming's schools, colleges, and agencies prioritize fairness, individual liberty, and opportunity for all.

Reason for Opposing DEI Initiatives:

DEI programs sound appealing in theory, but in practice, they erode the fundamental rights and principles that make our state and nation strong. These programs often prioritize identity - such as race, gender, or other demographic characteristics - over hard work and individual achievement. Policies like these create advantages or disadvantages based on factors beyond a person's control, effectively promoting reverse discrimination.

Wyoming citizens believe in equal opportunity, individual merit, independence, and fairness. Everyone deserves the chance to succeed based on their abilities and efforts, not their identity. DEI programs contradict this principle, fostering division rather than unity.

Even more troubling are the mandatory classes and training sessions embedded in DEI initiatives. These programs often push a narrow ideological narrative, leaving little room for open dialogue or alternative perspectives. This type of indoctrination stifles critical thinking and the free exchange of ideas - values that are foundational to our constitutional republic and deeply embedded in Wyoming's way of life.

There is a big difference between a liberal education as contemplated for land grant Universities under the Morrill Act and teaching liberal activism.

Taking Action to Protect Wyoming's Future Generations:

In 2024, I introduced a budget amendment to defund the DEI office and programs at the University of Wyoming. This was a necessary step to redirect public funds away from divisive and ideologically driven initiatives. Unfortunately, Governor Mark Gordon exercised his line-item veto to restore funding for DEI programs, and the University chose to reorganize and rename programs without addressing the legislative intent, which was to defund DEI entirely.

It became clear that broader, more decisive action was needed. That is why I am now sponsoring a comprehensive bill to terminate and defund DEI programs across all public institutions in Wyoming. This legislation extends to K-12 schools, community colleges, the University of Wyoming, and state agencies. It is not just about saving taxpayer dollars - it is about ensuring that Wyoming's institutions promote fairness and equality under the law.

Individual Achievement and Freedom:

Defunding DEI is not about rejecting diversity; Wyoming, by nature, is a very diverse place. It is about rejecting division and promoting true fairness and equal opportunity. Every Wyoming citizen should

have the opportunity to succeed based on their own merits and talents, free from ideological mandates or discriminatory policies.

As this debate continues, I remain committed to advancing policies that reflect the values of freedom, hard work, individual achievement and responsible governance. Together, we can ensure that Wyoming remains a place where opportunity thrives, fairness prevails, and every individual is respected for their contributions.

Join the conversation: #ENDDEIWY