

# President Trump's policies are quickly advancing in Ohio

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Returning public workers to the office, ending diversity, equity and inclusion programs, and restricting rights for transgender Americans are all on President Donald Trump's second-term agenda. But the same moves are gaining steam at the state level as well.

Republicans hold a majority in all branches of government at the state and federal levels, enabling them to advance their agenda swiftly. Policies coming from the White House and the Ohio Statehouse are closely aligned.

Here is a look at how Trump's policies are quickly advancing in Ohio.

## **Return to work**

Shortly after Trump told federal workers to return to the office, Gov. [Mike DeWine issued a similar order for state workers](#).

DeWine signed an executive order in February requiring state employees to return to the office full time by March 17 with some exceptions. This comes five years after the COVID-19 pandemic made work-from-home common for about 15,000 state workers.

In the latest version of the state budget bill, lawmakers added a provision to make certain all state workers do their jobs in-person rather than remotely.

On his first day back in, Trump ordered federal employees back to the office full-time as part of his [administration's mandate](#) to make government bureaucracy less costly and more efficient. Even before he took the oath of office, he said: "If they don't report for work, [we're firing them](#)."

## The Make America Healthy Again movement in Ohio

With Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., as secretary of health and human services, the "[Make America Healthy Again](#)" movement is kicking into high gear. Trump named Kennedy head of a new [MAHA Commission](#).

The [movement](#) seeks to ban [dyes and some preservatives in foods](#), ban fluoride in public drinking water systems, invest in researching alternative health care, focus on preventing chronic illnesses and other topics.

Medical freedom advocates, who oppose vaccine mandates, cheered Kennedy's appointment. But healthcare professionals are alarmed by his promotion of conspiracy theories claiming [vaccines cause autism](#), linking antidepressants to school shootings and even [suggesting WiFi causes cancer](#).

In Ohio, state Rep. [Jennifer Gross](#), R-West Chester, is again sponsoring a bill to require pharmacies to fill prescriptions for [off-label drugs](#). The Food and Drug Administration approves drugs for specific illnesses and conditions, but it's common for doctors to prescribe them for different conditions.

The use of off-label drugs got increased attention during the pandemic because of claims that a deworming drug, ivermectin, could treat COVID-19. Medical freedom groups touted the use of ivermectin and the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine as tools to combat COVID symptoms. A [study](#) published in the New England Journal of Medicine found ivermectin not an effective treatment.

Gross and state Rep. Nick Santucci, R-Niles, are also sponsoring [a resolution](#) urging Congress to investigate the U.S. food supply and ensure "all dangerous toxins and chemicals" are removed.

And state Rep. Levi Dean, R-Xenia, introduced [a bill](#) to prohibit fluoridating public water systems.

## Eliminating diversity, equity and inclusion

Trump launched a war against DEI programs and policies within federal agencies and the military.

Taking a cue from the president, Ohio Republicans ramped up efforts to wipe out DEI programs on college campuses and in K-12 schools.

Last legislative session, state Sen. Jerry Cirino's higher education [bill was blocked](#). This legislative session, Cirino, R-Kirtland, pushed through a higher education bill that went even further, and [DeWine signed it into law](#).

Cirino's [higher education overhaul](#) will eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion on campus, prevent faculty from striking and prohibit universities from weighing in on controversial topics.

Ohio's GOP-controlled Legislature quickly passed [Senate Bill 1](#) despite protests from students, professors and Democratic lawmakers. Backers of the bill say it's needed to prevent liberal indoctrination on Ohio's public universities and community colleges.

In February, State Sen. Andrew Brenner, R-Delaware, introduced [Senate Bill 113](#), which would ban DEI programs in K-12 schools across Ohio. In his sponsor testimony, Brenner said policies and programs that encourage diversity, equity and inclusion run contrary to Dr. Martin Luther King's vision that people be judged on the content of their own character.

## **Transgender rights restricted**

Trump signed recent executive orders to restrict the rights of transgender Americans, impacting their ability to [serve in the military](#), participate in school sports and obtain government documentation, including [passports](#) that reflect their gender identity.

In Ohio, the GOP-controlled Legislature passed laws to limit gender-affirming care for minors, bar trans girls from participating in girls' sports and block people from using bathrooms that align with their gender identity. The gender-affirming care law is on hold due to a lawsuit.

About 3.3% of high school students nationally identify as transgender and 2.2% are questioning, [according to a survey](#) conducted last year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This legislative session, Republican state Reps. Josh Williams of Sylvania and Jonathan Newman of Troy are sponsoring [House Bill 190](#), which they're labeling the "[Given Names Act](#)."

If it becomes law, public school staff and contractors would be required to use students' names as reported on their birth certificates. Alternative names would be prohibited unless the parent or guardian submits written consent. "Common derivatives" of given names, such as Bill for William, would be allowed.

The law would also block school employees from disclosing their own pronouns or titles if they don't match their biological sex.

Schools that fail to comply could lose some state money.

Some schools have faced lawsuits over their policies preventing students from "misgendering" others. Last year, a panel of federal circuit court judges said Olentangy Local Schools [can enforce policies against bullying of transgender students](#) by prohibiting students from intentionally misgendering others.

Williams said that the intent of his bill is to prevent public schools from discriminating against people on gender, sexual orientation or gender identity and comply with the U.S. Constitution. He said the legislation will help prevent lawsuits against districts.

"We're simply identifying to the schools that, based on the Supreme Court decision, you're no longer going to be allowed to use DEI in the hiring or promotion process," Williams said.

*Information from USA TODAY is included in this report. Reporters Jessie Balmert, Cole Behrens, Haley BeMiller and Donovan Hunt contributed to this report.*