

January 29, 2026

## Governance or Human Capital Committee Brief (2026)

# Board Oversight Brief: Faith and Belief Inclusion as a Workplace Culture and Risk Issue

### Board-level context

At Deere & Company's February 25, 2026, annual shareholders meeting, investors will vote on a proposal requesting that the Board evaluate and report on the reputational, human capital, operational, legal, and other risks of failing to allow faith-based Business Resource Groups (BRGs).

Deere has urged shareholders to reject the proposal, arguing that such matters should remain within management's and the Board's discretion and that producing a report would divert resources from strategic priorities.

Regardless of the vote outcome, the issue signals an emerging governance trend: **faith and belief inclusion is increasingly being raised as a workforce culture and human capital oversight matter.**

## Why This Is a Board-Level Issue

Religious identity and belief remain central for millions of employees worldwide. Organizations that fail to address faith and belief inclusion with clarity and consistency may encounter:

- **Talent and retention risks**  
Employees who feel their beliefs are unwelcome may disengage or exit.
- **Workplace culture and trust risks**  
Inclusion is increasingly understood to include faith and belief, not only other identity dimensions.
- **Operational and managerial consistency challenges**  
Leaders require clear policies and training to avoid misunderstandings, favoritism, or coercion.
- **Compliance and legal considerations**  
Title VII requires reasonable accommodation of sincerely held religious beliefs.
- **Reputational and stakeholder expectations**  
Shareholder scrutiny in this area is now appearing at major public companies.

## Current Market Signals

Faith-based employee communities are growing even as other workplace frameworks are being reassessed. The number of Fortune 500 companies with faith-oriented ERGs increased from 37 in 2022 to 62 in 2024.



Legal observers note that faith-based ERGs can be implemented successfully, but require guardrails: clear ERG policies, manager training, and strict avoidance of coercion or favoritism.

## Recommended Committee Actions

Boards should consider proactive oversight by:

1. Reviewing current policies on religious accommodation and employee groups
2. Assessing whether faith and belief inclusion is addressed consistently across global operations
3. Ensuring management has appropriate training and governance guardrails in place
4. Benchmarking organizational maturity before issues arise externally

## Benchmarking Opportunity: The Faith-Friendly Workplace REDI Index

The Religious Freedom & Business Foundation offers the **Faith-Friendly Workplace REDI Index**, a structured benchmarking tool to help organizations assess and strengthen workplace practices around faith and belief inclusion.

The **2026 Faith-Friendly Workplace REDI Index survey is now open**, and companies are invited to participate. <https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/redi>

### **Bottom line for Boards:**

Faith and belief inclusion is emerging as a measurable dimension of human capital strategy and risk oversight. Leading organizations will address it proactively, not reactively.

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