



State Department facing backlash for automated pronouns on employees' email profiles

by JANA E BOWENS | The National Desk
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A person holds a rainbow flag. (KOKH)

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WASHINGTON (TND) — A national debate over the use of preferred pronouns has landed at the steps of the [U.S. Department of State](#).

Matt Lee, a journalist with the Associated Press, said the State Department had begun adding pronouns to all of their employees' email profiles and some of them were incorrect.

"This is ridiculous," said Lee during a State Department press briefing on Thursday. "This is not an optional thing. This is something that has been just arbitrarily imposed."



State Department principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel was unaware of the change.



A national debate over the use of preferred pronouns has landed at the steps of the U.S. Department of State. (Video: The National Desk)

"I have not seen this phenomenon for myself," said Patel.

The State Department's spokesperson, Matthew Miller, later [tweeted it was an issue with Microsoft Outlook](#) and the "change was unintentional."

In an email to Sinclair Broadcast Group, a State Department spokesperson said the department regrets the mistake.

“ On May 18, the Bureau of Information Resource Management was testing a new feature that will provide users with the option to include their preferred pronouns in their email profile. During the test, the feature inadvertently went live, and a large number of employees had randomly assigned pronouns added to their profiles. The Department deeply regrets the confusion and distress this mistake caused our workforce. Prior to the official launch of this new feature, IRM will provide ample notice to the workforce, along with instructions on how to add their preferred pronouns to their profile if they wish to do so. The intent behind making this feature available is to make our systems more inclusive and provide employees with options.



discussed at a federal level as pronoun policies and laws are being looked at across the country.

In Arizona, Democratic State Rep. **Lorena Austin**, the legislature's first non-binary, gender non-conforming lawmaker said a bill forbidding teachers from using students' preferred pronouns without parental permission is hateful.

"We heard so much testimony from people in this community, from young people who were told that if they ever came out that they would be harmed, in some cases even killed," Austin said during the third reading of the bill.

Robert Wallace with Gays Against Groomers said parents have the right to know what is going on with their children.

"The struggles they're going through, and not create an alternate reality for them at school, while they go home and live a false reality with their parents," he said.

Arizona lawmakers approved the bill along party lines Monday.

The bill will now head to Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs's desk for a final ruling. Hobbs **shared on social media** last month that she would "swiftly" veto **SB 1001** if necessary.

In **Tennessee**, Republican Gov. Bill Lee **signed a bill** Wednesday that protects teachers if they refuse to refer to students by their preferred pronouns if it is not consistent with the student's biological sex.

In **Baltimore**, there's **a proposal** to make "the willful use of the incorrect name or pronouns of an individual" unlawful across various sectors, such as housing, employment, education and public accommodations.

A recent poll from **Newsweek** shows the majority of millennials are in favor of workplaces requiring gender pronouns on emails. Meanwhile, close to 50% of Gen Z respondents are opposed to the idea.

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