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Transgender flag and pronoun buttons are seen for sale during 2025 PrideFest in Des Moines. LILY SMITH/DES MOINES REGISTER FILE

Tensions flare between trans rights, religious freedom

Pronoun usage in the workplace at center of standoff

Jessica GuynnUSA TODAY

Jocelyn Boden, 47, managed a Bath & Body Works store for 3½ years in West Valley City, Utah.

In March, she hired a transgender man as a retail associate and, during their first shift together, Boden said she twice referred to the employee as "she" in keeping with her faith as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which teaches that gender is an immutable characteristic of a person's "eternal identity."

After two associates corrected her,

Boden informed her manager she would use the employee's chosen name but would not "degrade my religious and moral beliefs by lying and calling this biological girl a he," she told USA TODAY.

Boden was fired. Her termination notice cited "unwanted conduct directed at an individual based on their sex, which includes sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or transgender status." She says her termination was religious discrimination.

Boden is at the forefront of a growing conflict between religious freedoms and transgender and nonbinary rights in the workplace. While some say correct pronoun usage to affirm someone's identity is a matter of basic respect, others view expectations they will use someone's chosen gender pronouns as an infringement of their First Amendment's protection of religious freedom. The standoff has only intensified as the political and legal landscape has shifted.

When an employee objects on religious grounds to using a colleague's pronouns that are not consistent with their sex assigned at birth, "you have a clash of rights," said Jonathan Segal, a partner with the Duane Morris law firm who advises companies on how to comply with discrimination laws.

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Can cloud seeding control the weather?

Extreme events, such as Texas flooding in July, often stir up conspiracies

Hayleigh Evans

Arizona Republic
USA TODAY NETWORK

PHOENIX – In early July, a storm dumped as much as 20 inches of rain in parts of central Texas, the equivalent of months' worth of rain. It swelled the Guadalupe River with such devastating force that at least 130 people died in the flooding, including dozens of children.

Amid the grief and confusion, blame emerged in an unexpected place. A small cloud-seeding flight conducted by a startup named Rainmaker two days prior became the target of unfounded accusations. Elected officials and online influencers questioned whether the operation triggered or worsened the deluge.

The flight, more than 100 miles away and lasting about 20 minutes, released 70 grams of silver iodide into a set of clouds and prompted a drizzle that produced less than half a centimeter of rain on farmlands struggling with drought. Scientists said the distance made it scientifically impossible for the small seeding event to have played a role in the flooding. Even if it had, it would have been an insignificant amount of rain.

"The air that was over that area when the cloud seeding occurred was about 1,000 miles away by the time the big storm happened," said Robert Rauber, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. "We cannot control storms like that, and we cannot make big storms. It's just not possible."

Extreme weather events like that in Texas often stir up long-running conspiracies about weather modification

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Why retailers shouldn't discount the forgotten Gen X

Betty Lin-Fisher USA TODAY

Generation Xers have often been the discounted or forgotten generation, but a new joint report might change some marketers' minds about who they target.

Now in their peak expenditure years, Gen Xers have been leading global consumer spending since 2021, according to the report titled "The X Factor: How Generation X is quietly driving trillions in consumer spending."

"Our findings show that Gen X is the most influential consumer cohort of the next decade," Wolfgang Fengler, cofounder and CEO of World Data Lab said. NielsenIQ and World Data Lab worked to put together a global analysis of Gen X consumer behavior and spending trends

based on proprietary data from both companies, including World Data Lab's

consumer spending forecasts.
In 2025, Gen X is expected to drive \$15.2 trillion in global spending, including \$5 trillion in the United States alone, according to the report. And their spending power is projected to peak at \$23 trillion globally and \$7 trillion in the United States in 2035.

"To put this spending power in perspective, if you treated them as their own country, Gen Xers would form the world's second-largest consumer market – second only to the United States and roughly twice the size of China's total spending," Fengler said.

al spending," Fengler said. Members of Generation X wield influ-

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