

Tech Workers Refuse to Assist Military with AI Used for Killing

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Google Forced to Scrap 'Shaped' AI Ethics Board After Widespread Outrage

Employees, tech experts, and the public protested the appointments of The Heritage Foundation president and a drone company's CEO in Google AI Ethics Board -- The Google Con Exposed.

In a win for collective action, Google canceled an ethics advisory board on artificial intelligence that began to crumble after the appointment of a couple controversial members sparked outrage among thousands of employees, tech experts, and the public.

The decision, first [reported](#) late Thursday by Vox, came about a week after Google [announced](#) the formation of its Advanced Technology External Advisory Council (ATEAC) to help the tech giant pursue "responsible development" of artificial intelligence, or AI.

In the days after the ATEAC was unveiled, nearly 2,500 Google employees and more than 300 outside experts and advocates signed a worker-led [petition](#) calling on Google to remove board member Kay Coles James, president of The Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank with close ties to the Trump administration.

The petition, launched by Googlers Against Transphobia, denounced James as "vocally anti-trans, anti-LGBTQ, and anti-immigrant." It charged that "not only are James' views counter to Google's stated values, but they are directly counter to the project of ensuring that the development and application of AI prioritizes justice over profit."

While the effort to oust James garnered widespread support, she wasn't the only member who provoked intense criticism. "The inclusion of drone company CEO Dyan Gibbens," Vox noted, "reopened old divisions in the company over the use of the company's [AI for military applications](#)."

ATEAC members were pressured to step down in protest. Vox summarized:

Board member Alessandro Acquisti resigned. Another member, Joanna Bryson, defending her decision not to resign, claimed of James, "Believe it or not, I know worse about one of the other people." Other board members found themselves swamped with demands that they justify their decision to remain on the board.

In the face of mounting controversy, Google decided to scrap the board altogether. A spokesperson for the company told Vox on Thursday afternoon:

It's become clear that in the current environment, ATEAC can't function as we wanted. So we're ending the council and going back to the drawing board. We'll continue to be responsible in our work on the important issues that AI raises, and will find different ways of getting outside opinions on these topics.

The news was celebrated by those who had rallied against James and Gibbens, both at the company

and beyond.

"ATEAC is over, and we did this together," tweeted Googlers Against Transphobia. "We thank you for your support [and] unwillingness to compromise on hate."

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See also:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-00505-2>

<https://tinyurl.com/yym3o3x>

Inverse Times Open Publishing. <http://inversetimes.lingama.net/news/story-560.html>