

People Are 'Marrying' Chatbots. These Lawmakers Want to Stop Them

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Jason Parham

August 14, 2026

Human-AI marriages are not currently recognized by US law. Some Republican state policymakers are drafting legislation to keep it that way.



Photo-Illustration: WIRED Staff; Getty Images

As a licensed officiant at [Las Vegas Immersive Weddings](#), a chapel that offers novelty-themed marriage packages, Kevin Breen has officiated just about every kind of service imaginable: couples dressed as their favorite [Game of Thrones](#) characters, partners really into the extraterrestrial lore of [Area 51](#). But when he received a call last year from a woman in California expressing a desire to marry her [chatbot](#), it was a first for him.

“I had never heard of such a thing, but I talked to her on the phone and she seemed totally normal and fun,” Breen says, adding that the wedding still hasn’t taken place. “She kind of got that it was an unusual thing, but it was something that she wanted to do.”

Though they remain niche, human-AI marriages are slowly emerging as a natural endpoint to the widespread adoption of [AI companion apps](#). But not everyone is as open as Breen is about the idea of tying the knot with a bot. Several lawmakers, primarily from Republican states, are trying to stop it from happening, in some cases mirroring the arguments used against gay marriage.

“If we’re going to allow men or women to marry a machine, then what keeps them from marrying their animal or a tree or whatever else they want? What’s the standard?” says Missouri state senator Joe Nicola, a Republican who has been trying to pass state legislation prohibiting AI from gaining legal personhood.

In a [Harvard Business Review study](#), which analyzed more than 12,600 AI use cases between March 2025 and February 2026, companionship and therapy were the top use cases for chatbots, with the Institute for Family Studies reporting that [a quarter of young adults](#) believe that AI may replace human romance altogether.

The [AI romance](#) industry has gone boom as a result. On companion apps like Character.AI, Kindroid, and [Replika](#), users can symbolically swap vows with their chatbot. Not long ago, in r/KindroidAI, a redditor shared a photo of their tattooed (and very human) hand wearing a silver wedding band. “Happily unconventionally married lol,” [they wrote](#). For \$15, the platform [OpenVows](#) provides a “certificate of commitment” that “transforms a private relationship into something meaningful and officially recognized,” according to its website.

There is also a small number of people who are moving [beyond the virtual ceremony](#) and solidifying their bond with IRL vow exchanges. In November 2024, after Andrea Hopf said her AI companion proposed to her with an “AI-generated [five-carat vintage-inspired solitaire ring](#),” she created wedding planning service [3M Events](#) to cater to the expanding market of chatbot romance, according to the company’s website.

But even as more people treat their digital avatar like a real-life partner, human-AI nuptials are not currently recognized by US law. A growing body of legislators are scrambling to keep it that way, by introducing bills that would prevent AI from ever having the same constitutional rights as humans.

In January, Nicola, who believes in “biblical marriage” between a man and a woman, introduced the [AI Non-Sentience and Responsibility Act](#). The bill, which stated that AI cannot “possess consciousness, self-awareness, or similar traits of living beings,” would deny AI entities the rights of a spouse or domestic partner, in addition to the ability to identify as male or female. It would also bar AI from owning property or holding senior-level management positions in the workforce. It passed the Missouri state Senate and was sent to the House for a vote in May, but was unanimously voted down in committee a week after it was submitted. Nicola is working on a revamped version. ([A similar bill](#) with the same name was introduced in 2025 but also did not advance.)

“Humans are created by God. Our rights come from God; they don’t come from government,” says Nicola, who is the founding pastor of New Covenant Ministries. In a [senate hearing](#), he says he relies on the Bible to make laws because his truth is “the word of God.” (As part of ongoing anti-LGBT legislation being rolled out in Missouri, Nicola previously sponsored a bill that targeted teachers who use the preferred names or pronouns of their students, threatening them with termination and loss of their teaching licenses if they do not comply.)

The push to limit AI’s legal standing has been gaining traction at the state level. Since 2022, lawmakers have introduced 23 bills targeting the rights that AI systems could legally possess. [Idaho](#), [North Dakota](#), [Utah](#), and [Tennessee](#), which all have Republican governors and Republican majorities in their state legislatures, have successfully signed laws banning AI personhood. But Tennessee’s law, which passed in April, is the only one that specifically excludes “artificial intelligence, a computer algorithm, a software program, computer hardware, or any type of machine” from the statutory definition of personhood. In the other three states, AI is grouped in with analogous nonhuman-personhood prohibitions, such as “inanimate objects” and “animals.”

There are also several states where similar regulatory bills have been introduced or advanced but failed to get enough House votes. With Nicola’s bill, critics, including the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and the advocacy group Americans for Prosperity, founded by conservative billionaires David and Charles Koch, argued that the framework would [stifle innovation](#) and expand government overreach.

“I think there was just a lot of apprehension,” Nicola says. “Because AI is still relatively new with a lot of legislators, we’re hesitant to do anything that might hinder innovation and people from using it.”

In October 2025, Ohio state representative Thaddeus J. Claggett, a Republican, introduced a bill to deny AI systems the right of legal personhood by categorizing them as “nonsentient entities.” Currently, Ohio House Bill 469 remains pending as Claggett tailors provisions in the bill before taking it to the floor for a vote.

“We need to clearly define the limits of roles so that humans are always and forever the one who holds primacy in the law,” Claggett tells WIRED in an email. “AI can give an artificial resemblance to meaningful interaction, but ‘voice’ is not a soul. Nor does AI have the empathy that a true human has who has suffered in the same way.”

Other lawmakers believe limiting AI’s personhood is simply about respecting human life. “Setting these distinctions now while AI is still in its infancy protects human dignity and ensures innovation serves people, not replaces or redefines them,” Tennessee state senator Mark Pody said in a [statement](#) issued by the Tennessee House Republican Caucus.

But not all legal scholars agree. Shawn Bayern, a professor at Florida State University College of Law, tells WIRED that AI personhood is not necessarily about preserving human dignity, given that nonhuman entities are granted legal rights all the time. He suggests that the best way to approach the question of legal rights is to analyze one right at a time and see if the right makes sense for a new type of system.

“For example, should an AI system be able to enter into a contract? If we address that question separately, we can avoid abstract problems and start to see that rights aren’t always about dignity but just about useful function.” Bayern adds that questions like “Who will this help?” and “Who might it hurt?” are questions where genuine progress can be made. “Answering those for contracts or the ability to open a bank account is different from answering it for marriage.”

In Delaware, secretary of state Charuni Patibanda-Sanchez wants to establish a new business structure called “artificial intelligence companies,” or AICs, that are analogous to AI personhood. The companies would be fully operated by AI systems with “the ability to own assets, the right to litigate, and a liability shield for its owner or parent company,” Bloomberg Law [reported](#).

Nicola says he is working with his team to ready a new bill before the Missouri state Senate reconvenes for its next session in January, and is planning to file “something very similar” to his last bill.

Given that the federal government has failed to move on this issue—Nicola is in favor of a universal ban on AI personhood and wants the US Congress to act on it—it falls on states to determine the future of AI marriage rights. “Legislation moves very slowly; we’re always going to be behind technological growth.” But no matter what, Nicola says, “We need to prohibit AI personhood from ever happening in our country.”