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Yakima-area leaders react to death of conservative activist Charlie Kirk

Yakima Herald-Republic

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FILE - Charlie Kirk speaks during a town hall meeting on March 17, 2025, in Oconomowoc, Wis.

Jeffrey Phelps - FR59249 AP

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Local leaders condemned the attack on Turning Point USA president and founder Charlie Kirk after the conservative activist was shot and killed Wednesday in Utah.

Kirk, 31, was speaking as part of his "The American Comeback" tour at Utah Valley University in Orem. A supporter of President Donald Trump, Kirk was a regular speaker on cable TV and radio. He co-founded Turning Point in 2012 to campaign for lower taxes and limited government on college campuses.

Kirk was the keynote speaker at a Republican Party fundraising dinner in Yakima in 2023. Matt Brown, chairman of the Yakima County Republican Party, described him as a friend and said the attack was an assault on free speech, public discourse and the “very freedoms that define America.”

“It is time for every citizen, every leader, and every institution to remember that America is built on the open exchange of ideas, not fear, not violence, and not suppression,” Brown wrote in a statement Wednesday afternoon. “We will not back down, we will not be silenced, and we will not allow violence to dictate the future of this country.”



Conservative activist Charlie Kirk assassinated at Utah university
By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, MARK SHERMAN and
ERIC TUCKER - Associated Press

Soneya Lund, the chair of the Yakima County Democrats, also condemned the shooting in a post on Facebook.

“The news of the shooting death of Charlie Kirk in Utah is horrifying. There is no place for political violence in democracy. Thoughts and prayers for his wife and children,” she wrote.

State Sen. Nikki Torres, a Republican from Pasco who represents the Lower Yakima Valley, is part of the Legislature’s Joint Select Committee on Civic Health, a bipartisan panel co-led by Lt. Gov. Denny Heck. The group aims to examine threats to civil discourse and strengthen civic engagement in Washington state.

“We can have disagreements without violence. We can debate issues, hear each other out, and still walk away with our opinions intact. What we cannot do is allow violence to become part of our politics,” Torres said in a statement. “My prayers are with Charlie Kirk’s family. This rise in political violence must not be tolerated. We need to take real steps to ensure our disagreements never turn into violence.”

U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse, a Sunnyside Republican who represents Central Washington, described Kirk's death as a “despicable act of violence.”

“As we pray for him, his wife, and two young children, we must also recognize the unacceptable pattern of political violence we have witnessed in recent years,” he said in a statement. “Political speech is free speech, and debate between ideologies is one of our core principles that has sustained this country for almost 250 years. It must be cherished and protected.”

This story is developing and may be updated.

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