

Suspect in Kirk killing became ‘more political’



Wendy Lucas, a Utah Valley University student, looks at a memorial for Charlie Kirk at Utah Valley University on Friday in Orem, Utah. A 22-year-old man has been arrested in connection with the shooting death of Kirk. (LINDSEY WASSON | Associated Press)

The arrest of Tyler Robinson marks a major break in the case that has shocked the country. The investigation is ongoing.

BY ERIC TUCKER, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, JESSE BEDAYN AND HANNAH SCHOENBAUM
Associated Press

OREM, Utah — A 22-year-old Utah man who was arrested and booked on murder charges in the assassination of Charlie Kirk held deep disdain for the conservative activist’s provocative viewpoints and indicated to a family member that he was responsible for the shooting, authorities said Friday.

The arrest marked a major break in a case that shocked the country and raised fresh alarms about political violence in a deeply polarized United States.

Tyler Robinson had become “more political” in the run-up to the shooting and mentioned during a dinner with family that Kirk would be visiting Utah, Gov. Spencer Cox said at a news conference.

The governor cited as evidence engravings on bullet casings found in the rifle that authorities believe was used in the attack, as well as chat app messages attributed to the suspect that a roommate shared with law enforcement.

The governor credited Robinson’s family with helping turn him over to authorities.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we got him,” Cox said soon after the arrest was first heralded by President Donald Trump on the Fox News show “Fox & Friends.”

Robinson is believed to have acted alone, and the investigation is ongoing, Cox said. He was arrested on suspicion of capital murder, weapons and obstruction offenses. He was expected to be formally charged Tuesday ahead of an initial court appearance. **See KIRK, 2A**



Tyler Robinson indicated to a family member that he was responsible for the shooting of Kirk, officials say. (Utah Governor’s Office via Associated Press)

Inside

- Utah’s governor, in impassioned remarks, urges Americans to find ‘off-ramp’ from political violence, **Page 3A**
- Grief over Charlie Kirk’s assassination echoes worldwide and testifies to his influence on the right, **Page 5A**

Pinellas investigates teachers over social media posts

Florida’s education commissioner has threatened to sanction educators over comments on activist Charlie Kirk’s death.

BY JEFFREY S. SOLOCHEK
Times Staff Writer

The Pinellas County school district has launched reviews of at least three teachers for negative social media comments about conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who was killed Wednesday.

The district’s office of professional standards was looking into whether the posts violated any local policies or state law.

Deputy Superintendent Stephanie Woodford said Friday that the district began looking

into the social media posts after Florida Education Commissioner Anastasios Kamoutsas sent out a letter Thursday warning teachers that any “despicable comments” about Kirk’s death might be “sanctionable.”

Kamoutsas stated that while teachers have a First Amendment right to free speech, that doesn’t mean carte blanche authority to say and do whatever they feel. He noted that if their personal views become public and undermine the trust

See TEACHERS, 2A



Children visit a memorial at Turning Point USA headquarters in Phoenix on Thursday after the death of Charlie Kirk at a Utah college on Wednesday. (ROSS D. FRANKLIN | Associated Press)

Local beach restoration begins with no federal support

In Pinellas County, dozens of beachfront property owners will get bypassed after refusing public access.

BY COLBI EDMONDS
Times Staff Writer

For the first time since 2018, Pinellas County has begun beach renourishment along its barrier islands that will help strengthen the coast against future storms.

But the county will proceed without financial support from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which now requires all beachfront property owners to grant ongoing public access to their property. The Army Corps historically picked up 65% of the cost.

There has been resistance among residents, and only 80% of property owners have complied with temporary agreements. So, for the first time, the county is paying the entire bill: \$125.7 million.

The county is using Tourism Development Tax dollars and \$14.2 million in grant reimbursement from the state to cover the cost, which commissioners approved in June.

The Sand Key portion of the project will have gaps because more than 91 residents haven’t signed temporary construction easements, including more than 30 people from Indian Shores.

So there may be low spots behind some homes, particularly on Indian Rocks Beach, Indian Shores and Redington Shores. Sand still will be spread to form a beach on public portions of the shoreline farther from homes.

Although the beach will eventually even out, the gaps in sand could allow flooding, and residents without a dune will have less protection against future storm surge.

“This just creates a channel right toward their property,” said Pinellas County Public Works Director Kelli Hammer Levy.

The Army Corps announced in 2022 that it would help cover the cost of beach renourishment on the condition that residents signed permanent easements, which grant public access to their property. Prior to that policy switch, the Corps required only temporary access during ongoing construction.

Since then, some residents, wary of signing over property rights, have resisted county efforts to renourish the beach. And Pinellas County officials have been unable to solve disagreements with the Corps regarding its policy.

“When Helene came, we lost our water pipes, we lost all the underground infrastructure down in Sunset Beach,” Pinellas County Commissioner Kathleen Peters said, “because there was no sand, no beach, to protect that infrastructure.”

U.S. Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, a Republican who represents a portion of Pinellas County, has been working with the Corps to modify the interpretation of its policy. **See BEACHES, 9A**

Fla. to execute Polk man whose lawyers say is mentally disabled



David Pittman appears in a jail photo taken after his 1990 arrest in Polk County, left, and more recently in a prison mug shot, right. Pittman faces execution next week. (Polk County Sheriff’s Office-Florida Department of Corrections)

Evidence suggests David Pittman has lifelong intellectual disabilities, which his attorneys say should bar him from receiving the death penalty.

BY DAN SULLIVAN
Times Staff Writer

David Joseph Pittman has lived most of his life on Florida’s death row for a 1990 triple murder in Polk County.

He has trouble reading basic words like “dog,” his attorneys say. He often needs to have things explained to him repeatedly. His IQ has throughout his

life been pegged in the low 70s.

Evidence going back to his childhood suggests that Pittman, 63, is a man with an intellectual disability, his lawyers say. Federal case law forbids the death penalty for people with intellectual impairments. But Florida plans to execute Pittman next week.

Unless a federal court intervenes, Pittman on Wednesday

will become the 12th person put to death in Florida in 2025. Gov. Ron DeSantis has ordered executions at a rapid pace this year, signing more death warrants in any single year than any of his predecessors.

Pittman’s case stands out among the rest. The law and attitudes toward intellectual disability have evolved in the decades

since his crime. His attorneys say he should be given a chance to show in court evidence of his impairments, which would now preclude him from capital punishment.

“It is an absolute right that is granted to these people,” attorney Julissa Fontan told a judge in August. “If we do not do this, we are running the risk of actually executing an intellectually disabled man here in the state of Florida.” **See PITTMAN, 10A**