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# THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2025 "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II COR. 3:17

IndyStar.

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



Killian Rooks, left, Turning Point USA member of the Indiana University Indianapolis chapter, talks with Sujan Chakrabortym, center, and others who stop by the group's information table at the Campus Center on Nov. 6. Following the assassination of Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk in September, students in Indiana and around the country have channeled their mourning into political engagement, resulting in an influx of new campus chapters and overall membership. KELLY WILKINSON/INDYSTAR

## 'This is just the beginning'

Turning Point USA chapters see membership surge on Indiana campuses

Cate Charron Indianapolis Star | USA TODAY NETWORK

pair of students stood in the Indiana University Indianapolis student center asking a simple legal question: "Is 'hate speech' protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution?" • Students slowed to read the white board, and many shuffled toward the table, where Ella Stegall or Killian Rooks would ask, "What do you think?" Pocket Constitutions, buttons, stickers and candy sprawled across a stars-and-stripes plastic tablecloth were the reward for chatting. • "(People) just generally seem more open to at least kind of having a conversation," Stegall said. "They may not be all like, 'Oh my gosh, let me be your best friend,' but OK, your founder sacrificed his life for this. Let me just at least dip my toe in to see what's actually going on here."

movement, but it's a movement for political discussion on campus."

"It's not just a

conservative

James Chambers Turning Point USA chapter president at IU Bloomington

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## Decades before fatal shooting in Whitestown, a paperboy's killing drew national headlines

**Ryan Murphy** 

Indianapolis Star **USA TODAY NETWORK** 

There was no warning before the gunshot was fired from within the house. Inside, an armed homeowner believed they'd thwarted a crime. Feet away, a loved one watched as their family member died, the light low before sunrise.

That was the case on Nov. 5, 2025, as it also was on Sept. 25, 1986. Nearly four decades before the death of Maria Florinda Ríos Pérez, a high school junior mistaken for a vandal was fatally shot while delivering The Indianapolis Star on his early morning paper route.

The killing of Scott "Patrick" Lawson, 16, drew national headlines. As the teen approached a northside home to deliver the morning paper, 74-year-old Nokomis Toombs fired a shotgun through his living room window, striking Lawson in the chest. Lawson's mother, who was helping her son out that morning, was parked feet away.

Toombs told police he'd been keeping an all-night vigil after a rash of youth violence near his home in the 5200 block of North Rosslyn Avenue north of the Indiana Fairgrounds. When

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A station wagon parked next to Nokomis Toombs' house warns of a "burgler proof home" on Sept. 25, 1986. JIM YOUNG/INDYSTAR ARCHIVES

## 'Crisis' at Beckwith's church in spotlight

**Rising GOP political star** has ties to controversy

**Hayleigh Colombo** 

Indianapolis Star USA TODAY NETWORK

A growing controversy at the Cen-

tral Indiana church where Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith still serves as a campus pastor is starting to reverberate more widely in the Indiana political world, with the potential to ensnare a rising GOP political star. It all started in late October when

the adult son of Life Church's lead pastor was arrested on seven felony counts related to child sex crimes. Beckwith has described the lead pastor, Nathan Peternel, as his "spiritual brother in arms" and the two work together and have their own podcast called "Jesus, Sex and Politics."

The arrest of his son Jonathan Peternel, 24, quickly led to other former church members speaking about their own experiences with Nathan Peternel, as detailed by national news site 24Site News, run by veteran Indiana political reporter Tom LoBianco,

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### **Indy councilor** latest victim of 'swatting,' bomb threats

**Kayla Dwyer** 

Indianapolis Star **USA TODAY NETWORK** 

The threats of violence and "swatting" appear to be spreading to the Indianapolis City-County Council.

Councilor Nick Roberts wrote on so-



cial media that he received "multiple threats about bombings and a swatting attempt" on Nov. 20, not long after he had posted about his outrage at the other such threats made against numerous state

senators who had not professed explicit support of President Donald Trump's mid-decade redistricting push. Still, he said the precise reason for the threats against him remain unclear.

To date, at least seven senators have received some kind of threat or a false report made about them to law enforcement that prompts a swift response, known as "swatting." Almost all of them have either expressed negative or no opinions about redistricting. The exception is Sen. Andy Zay,

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