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Clyburn: ‘This is an unspeakable horror’



Police officers work at Utah Valley University in Orem after conservative activist Charlie Kirk was fatally shot on Sept. 10. JIM URQUHART/REUTERS

SC politicians condemn violence after Charlie Kirk shot, killed

Bella Carpentier
Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina lawmakers across political parties are united in condemning political violence after conservative commentator Charlie Kirk was shot and killed in Utah.

Kirk, the 31-year-old co-founder of conservative youth group Turning Point USA, was speaking at an event at Utah Valley University (UVU) when he was shot in the neck. President Donald Trump confirmed in a Truth Social post that the influencer died from the gunshot.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kash Patel stated around 6:30 p.m. (EST) that the alleged subject for the shooting was in custody, and that the department would provide more updates when it was able. UVU officials initially said that a shooting suspect was taken into custody around 1:15 p.m. (MDT), USA Today reported, however a spokesperson for the university later

“Our hearts break for the Kirk family, Turning Point USA, and all who had the privilege of knowing Charlie personally. He was a beacon of true leadership, rooted deeply in his faith as a Christian.”

Rep. Nancy Mace (R-District 1)

told the New York Times that the person in custody was not the shooter.

South Carolina lawmakers have issued an outpouring of support for Kirk’s family on social media as reports of the shooting and his death emerged.

“Our hearts break for the Kirk family, Turning Point USA, and all who had the privilege of knowing Charlie personally. He was a beacon of true leadership, rooted deeply in his faith as a Christian,” Rep. Nancy Mace (R-District 1) stated.

“This is an unspeakable horror,” Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-District 6) stated on X. “Any act of political violence is unacceptable, has no place anywhere, and must always be condemned.”

“This is truly heart-breaking” Rep.

Ralph Norman (R-District 5) stated. “Elaine and I are praying for Charlie’s young family. Political violence has no place in America. Justice must be swift.”

“Keeping Charlie Kirk and his family in my prayers following today’s tragic incident at Utah Valley University,” Sen. Tim Scott (R-South Carolina) stated.

“Today is a tragic day for our country. There is a pervasive sickness that is poisoning America,” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) stated. “Charlie Kirk engaged in thoughtful and lively political debate, but he re-

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Schools try to balance speech, safety

BrieAnna J. Frank
USA TODAY

The shooting death of conservative activist Charlie Kirk at a Utah university Sept. 10 has brought to the forefront the challenge colleges and universities face in balancing a mission of critical inquiry with maintaining safety in a time of renewed political violence.

It’s a “major dilemma” for schools around the country, said Ken Paulson, director of Middle Tennessee State University’s Free Speech Center.

“We don’t want campuses to be able to turn away speakers that don’t have the resources for security,” he said. “You also don’t want a situation where only the most tame and tepid speakers can come because they don’t provoke angry responses.”

The challenge is “keeping me up at night,” said Todd Wolfson, a Rutgers University professor who also serves as president of the American Association of University Professors.

And the problem is larger than just college campuses, he said – echoing concerns other experts expressed to USA TODAY about a growing national trend of polarization and violence.

Kirk’s death is the latest in a wave of violent acts that, to some, echoes the era in which numerous national leaders have been gunned down.

“The concern is something is igniting here in America that unfortunately is all too familiar to those who lived in the ‘60s and ‘70s,” said Paulson, a former USA TODAY editor-in-chief.

Kirk’s death also comes at a time when tensions over free speech are pervading college campuses, prompting fierce debate among school leaders about how best to respond.

On Sept. 9, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression published a report that found 1 in 3 college students accept, at least to some extent, violence as a means of stopping a speech on campus.

Though experts have different perspectives on the actions colleges and universities have taken and should take to address the issue, they agreed that they must be at the forefront of the fight to promote both free speech and public safety.

And they universally agreed that Kirk’s killing cannot dissuade schools from hosting controversial speakers.

“We can’t shut down speeches on college campuses because some people are willing to ... channel their political anger into violence,” Paulson said.

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