

CHARLIE KIRK KILLING

OFFICIALS CHARGE SUSPECT



ALEX GOODLETT, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Utah County Attorney Jeff Gray speaks during a news conference Tuesday announcing charges filed against Tyler Robinson in Provo, Utah.

Authorities: Robinson wrote a confession note, left behind DNA

JESSE BEDAYN, HANNAH SCHOENBAUM
AND JOHN SEEWER
Associated Press

PROVO, Utah — Prosecutors brought a murder charge Tuesday against the man accused of killing Charlie Kirk and outlined evidence, including a text message confession to his partner and a note left beforehand saying he had the opportunity to kill one of the nation’s leading conservative voices “and I’m going to take it.”

DNA on the trigger of the rifle that killed Kirk also matched that of Tyler Robinson, Utah County Attorney Jeff Gray said while outlining the evidence and announcing charges that could result in the death penalty if Robinson is convicted.

The prosecutor said Robinson, 22, wrote in one text that he spent more than a week planning the attack on Kirk, a prominent force in politics credited with energizing the Republican youth movement and helping Donald Trump win back the White House in 2024.

Kirk was gunned down Sept. 10 while speaking with students at Utah Valley University. Prosecutors allege Robinson shot Kirk in the neck with a bolt-action rifle from the roof of a nearby building on the

campus in Orem, about 40 miles south of Salt Lake City.

Robinson appeared briefly Tuesday before a judge by video from jail. He nodded slightly at times but mostly stared straight ahead as the judge read the charges against him and appointed an attorney to represent him. Robinson’s family declined to comment to The Associated Press since his arrest.

Motive unclear

Authorities have not revealed a clear motive in the shooting, but Gray said Robinson wrote in a text about Kirk to his partner: “I had enough of his hatred. Some hate can’t be negotiated out.”

Robinson also left a note for his partner hidden under a keyboard that said, “I had the opportunity to take out Charlie Kirk and I’m going to take it,” according to Gray.

The prosecutor declined to answer whether Robinson targeted Kirk for his anti-transgender views. Kirk was shot while taking a question that touched on mass shootings, gun violence and transgender people.

“That is for a jury to decide,” Gray said.

Robinson was involved in a romantic relationship with his roommate, who investigators say was transgender, which hasn’t been confirmed. Gray said the partner is cooperating with investigators.

Robinson’s partner appeared shocked in the text exchange after the shooting, according to court documents, asking Robinson “why he did it and how long he’d been planning it.”

More political

While authorities say Robinson isn’t cooperating with investigators, they say his family and friends have been talking.

Robinson’s mother told investigators their son turned left politically in the last year and became more supportive of gay and transgender rights after dating someone who is transgender, Gray said.

Those decisions prompted several conversations in the household, especially between Robinson and his father. They had different political views and Robinson told his partner in a text that his dad had become a “diehard MAGA” since Trump was elected.

Robinson’s mother recognized him when authorities released a picture of the suspect and his parents confronted him, at which time Robinson said he wanted to kill himself, Gray said.

The family persuaded him to meet with a family friend who is a retired sheriff’s deputy, who persuaded Robinson to turn himself in, the prosecutor said.

Please see KIRK KILLING, Page A2

UW study: Schools abandoning performance pay for teachers

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A new UW-Madison study suggests Wisconsin school districts — including some in Dane County — have moved away from compensation systems that at least partly paid teachers for performance.

Fourteen years after a controversial state law gave districts the flexibility to pay teachers based on factors other than just seniority and educational attainment, 24 districts in the study have largely reverted to “step-and-lane” compensation systems that only consider how many years of experience and what degrees a teacher has.

In their July working paper, researchers

from the Wisconsin Center for Education Research pointed to four main reasons district administrators have forgone performance pay:

- It led to “discontent” among staff.
- Principals were unable or unwilling to make performance distinctions among teachers.
- Performance pay systems were too complex and required too much effort to administer.
- Perceptions among school staff that more flexibility in pay led to inequities among teachers.

“Almost all the districts that experimented with using teacher performance as more than a minimal requirement for

pay progression or bonuses have abandoned this approach,” the paper reports.

The 2011 law known as Act 10 that largely gutted most union rights for most public-sector workers made it possible for school districts to experiment with more flexible salary systems, and the goal of the WCER study was to see if any of the 25 districts that had made changes to their pay systems as of 2014 still maintained those changes 10 years later, in 2024.

Researchers obtained information from 24 of the 25 districts studied in 2014 and found that most of them had largely reverted to the step-and-lane system. This is despite some evidence in the education

research literature that “flexible pay has potential benefits in terms of both teacher retention and student performance.”

“Like many reforms in education, however, teacher compensation reforms are subject to entropy as conditions change and old patterns of thinking persist,” the researchers write.

Five Dane County districts — DeForest, Middleton-Cross Plains, Monona Grove, Sun Prairie and Verona — were among the initial 25 districts studied and provided data for the July working paper, but WCER researchers would not specify their findings for any specific district.

Please see TEACHERS, Page A2