

People are losing jobs due to social media posts about Charlie Kirk

September 13, 2025 5:00 AM ET



<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/nx-s1-5538476>

AILSA CHANG, HOST:

Dozens of people have been fired, suspended or put under investigation by their employers since Charlie Kirk was assassinated last week. The reason - their social media posts about the conservative political influencer. In some instances, these firings and investigations have been cheered on by government officials and lawmakers. NPR's Jude Joffe-Block and Huo Jingnan have been reporting about this and join us now. Hello to both of you.

HUO JINGNAN, BYLINE: Hello.

JUDE JOFFE-BLOCK, BYLINE: Hello.

CHANG: OK, Jingnan, let's start with you. What do we know so far about who exactly is facing consequences for these online comments about Charlie Kirk since his murder?

HUO: So far, we know that at least 40 people and counting have been affected. We're talking about teachers, civil servants, nurses, doctors, and that is just what's just been publicly reported by news outlets.

JOFFE-BLOCK: And this is in part being driven by a campaign we're seeing online. Kirk's supporters and high-profile, right-wing influencers, along with some elected officials, have been mobilizing to get people fired for posting in a celebratory way about Kirk's murder. And there's actually a couple of websites tracking these. One claims that it's collected 60,000 submissions. Though, right now, you can't see the posts and we can't verify that number or that any of these posts or all of these posts are authentic. Some people who've been publicly called out online for their post told us they've received threats to their physical safety.

CHANG: And what sort of things have people posted that led to them being on these various lists?

JOFFE-BLOCK: Well, I should note that there have been posts and videos of people celebrating or commenting in ways that most people would find offensive or even disturbing. Among the people we know are facing consequences at work, there's a range in what they've said. You know, some said Kirk deserved it. Some are objecting to how he was memorialized, others focused on lack of action on gun violence. One staff member at a public university in Tennessee was fired for posting, looks like Charlie spoke his fate into existence. Hate begets hate, zero sympathy. Many posts express varying degrees of schadenfreude. You know, some go all the way to saying good riddance and karma. And on the other hand, some media figures, including MSNBC's Matthew Dowd and Washington Post's Karen Attiah, have been fired, as well, for comments that were not celebratory but were critical of Kirk's views and his contributions to our current political environment.

HUO: For context, Kirk had a large following for his conservative Christian views. And that included promoting large families. But he also made some incendiary remarks. For example, he asserted that the 1964 Civil Rights Act was a mistake and cast immigrants and transgender people as threats. He also said that some gun deaths were worth it to have the Second Amendment, which was widely cited in online posts.

CHANG: Well, Jingnan, how much can we say so far about whether any of these firings violate the First Amendment? What do you think?

HUO: Well, I spoke to Rebekah Tromble, a professor at Northeastern University who studies First Amendment issues, among other things. And she says it depends on circumstances like the specific job, the employer and the state. It may be that in many cases no laws have been violated. Still, Tromble says that what's really troubling is government officials are also calling for people to be fired or face other consequences for their speech.

CHANG: Well, what are conservative officials and lawmakers saying so far about all this?

JOFFE-BLOCK: Well, yeah, we've seen right-wing influencers on social media highlight cases of certain posts, and then Republican officials at various levels of government reposting and joining the calls for people to lose their jobs. You know, Tennessee Senator Marsha Blackburn has called for the immediate firing of multiple people in her state. Deputy Secretary of State Chris Landau says he's taking action against foreigners who made posts, quote, "praising, rationalizing or making light of Kirk's assassination." He's asked people to send him examples. He says he's revoking visas. The head of the DOJ's Civil Rights Division, Harmeet Dhillon, shared a post that Clemson University was firing a professor over their comments and suggested universities could lose federal funding.

HUO: Another striking example is Clay Higgins, a Republican member of the House from Louisiana. He posted he would, quote, "use congressional authority and every influence with big tech platforms to mandate immediate ban for life for every post or commenter that belittled the assassination." This is a big tone shift. For years, Republicans have said that when tech companies moderate content, it's censorship. Here's Rebekah Tromble, the First Amendment expert I talked to.

REBEKAH TROMBLE: We are running at essentially warp speed directly into maybe an even worse moment of government repression and censorship than we witnessed during the McCarthy era.

CHANG: Well, how much have we seen this kind of crowdsourced targeting of people over speech before?

JOFFE-BLOCK: You know, the internet is definitely built for these kinds of crowdsourcing projects. You know, Charlie Kirk himself rose to fame for creating a watch list, encouraging students to report professors they consider to be radical left. You know, we've seen some efforts to call out people to get fired, you know, in the wake of George Floyd's murder and at other moments. But what stands out in the current case is that the way in which the government officials at various levels are using their power.

CHANG: That is NPR's Jude Joffe-Block and Huo Jingnan. Thank you to both of you.

HUO: Thank you.

JOFFE-BLOCK: Thank you.

Discussion Artifact

Original Oratory 2025 National Champion Angad Singh - Living on a Prayer (1st place)



<https://youtu.be/Q2XWImQYvRg?si=LcjOqCDKs-XTPct8>

The Road Not Taken

Robert Frost

Published in the Atlantic Monthly, 1915

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Discussion Artifact



The Little Self Made Man

By: Víctor Hugo Yáñez Piña