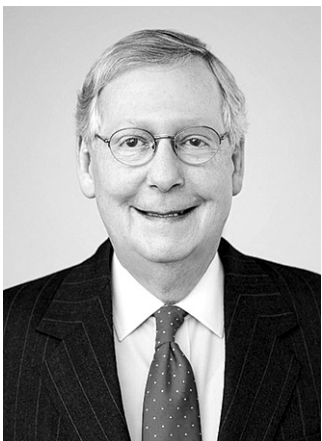


McConnell: Clash of ideas not pretext for war

By Mitch McConnell

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In the wake of the shooting death last week of conservative political activist Charlie Kirk in Utah, U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, penned the following op-ed for The Courier-Journal in Louisville regarding political violence threatening the fabric of American society:



Sen. Mitch McConnell

Charlie Kirk was a husband, a father of young children and a man of faith. His death (Sept. 10) is gut-wrenching on those grounds, above all else. I'm keeping Charlie's family in my prayers as they try to make sense of the senseless, as are so many Kentuckians who

were drawn to his work in the public eye. Of course, Charlie's death will be remembered not just as a personal tragedy but an assassination — an escalation of the political violence that increasingly threatens the fabric of

our society. If you're worried and angry about that trend, you're absolutely right to be. In Congress, it is tempting to declare a particularly tense or emotionally charged debate as unprecedented or corrosive. As something of an elder statesman, I often find myself reminding colleagues that we've been through worse than today's recurring gridlock. In fact, our Constitution anticipated and encouraged lively debate. Our system of government was built for it. Passionate disagreement is a sign of the health of our democracy. And guardrails exist to protect it. Throughout my career in the Senate, I've tried to

reaffirm these guardrails: I've been a staunch opponent of restrictions on free speech. I've fought repeatedly to preserve the right to political speech in elections (even for deep-pocketed Democratic opponents) and in the public square (even for flag-burners). In the Senate, I've fought just as hard to protect the rights of the minority party to unlimited debate (even when my side wasn't the one that stood to gain). Guardrails matter. They keep the American experiment rolling. But if passionate disagreement is a sign of health, political violence like yesterday's sickening display is a sign of decay. To excuse or encour-

age it is to place a cynical bet against America. Whatever an assassin's deluded justification, there is nothing less American than to override the guardrails of public discourse. (Last Wednesday's assassination comes with an especially bitter irony. Charlie Kirk's success as an activist and communicator came from his appetite for passionate disagreement. His willingness to peacefully debate all comers was an example of exactly what the founders had in mind. But the founders also knew that combating the sort of cowardice behind political assassination was too big a job for government, alone. They knew that the responsibility to reject po-

litical violence would rest on the shoulders of every American. Every one of us must resist the temptation to treat those with different politics as enemies. We must treat the clash of ideas in the public square as a celebration of our democracy, not a pretext for war. If you're ever tempted to believe in recourse to violence among neighbors, patriots and fellow citizens, think again. Think of Charlie. And keep his family in your prayers. *McConnell is the United States Senator for Kentucky. Earlier this year, he concluded his tenure as the longest-serving Senate party leader in American history.*

Kentucky parties react to Kirk shooting

After the Sept. 10 shooting death of conservative and Christian activist Charlie Kirk Sept. 10 during a public debate on the Utah Valley University campus in Orem, Utah, both the Republican and Democratic parties of Kentucky condemned the killing. • The Republican Party of Kentucky Chairman Robert J. Benvenuti III issued this statement on Sept. 11: "Today, our nation is plunged into profound grief with the loss of Charlie Kirk, a remarkable individual whose life exemplified dedication not only to

the principles of liberty but also to the joys and responsibilities of family and faith. "This heinous act of political violence strikes at the heart of our democracy and cannot be tolerated. The RPK is praying for his wife, Erika, and their two young children, as well as Turning Point USA, and all who cherished his work. "We trust that law enforcement will be successful in its pursuit of evil and that justice will be served. And, we remind those that facilitate, encourage, or engage in political extremism and violence in an effort to erode our God given rights,

that they will never be victorious." • Kentucky Democratic Party Chair Colmon Elridge released this statement on Sept. 10: "What happened today in Utah isn't just a tragedy but a despicable act of political violence that has no place in our democracy. No American, Democrat or Republican, should live in fear of becoming a target based on what they believe or how they vote. "Our thoughts and prayers are with Charlie Kirk's family and with the students and staff impacted by today's senseless events."

Opinion: Pendleton needs its churches for peace

By I. Scott Tackett

A woman is dead. An old friend stands indicted. The papers will print the charges and the court dates; rumor will do the rest. Pendleton County does not need more rumor. We need clarity, compassion and courage — together. Here is what we know: on Aug. 20, a grand jury indicted David O'Hara on charges related to the death of Donna Gibson, who was found at a home in Falmouth on Aug. 3. He's also charged as a persistent felony offender and remains jailed on separate offenses. Those are the facts on record; a courtroom will handle the legal truth. Here is what we don't know: the full story between two people who once shared a history. We don't yet know the complete mix of motive, state of mind, or what pressures were boiling under the surface. That is why small towns must adopt a discipline we rarely practice — holding a hard line on truth without turning into a jury of gossips. But we do know something larger about our moment. Kentucky's leaders just toughened penalties through the Safer Kentucky Act; some provisions kicked in this month. Laws can steady the rails, but they cannot heal a heart. At the same time, overdose deaths have fallen — praise God for lives spared — yet one traffic stop in Maysville still turns up narcotics, and one Friday night on KY-10 still ends in a fatal crash. The headlines change; the ache beneath them doesn't. If we're honest, much of our harm is domestic — inside kitchens and living rooms before it spills into sirens and courtrooms. Kentucky's latest domestic-violence figures read like a warning siren of their own: tens of thousands of reports, thousands of arrests, thousands of emergency protective orders served. If we want fewer murder indictments and fewer children growing up afraid, we have to face the quiet violence next door, not only

the spectacular violence on TV. So what should Falmouth do—right now? 1) Guard your mouth like a medic guards a wound. Speak only what is confirmed. Refuse rumor. Refuse character assassination. When we pass along unverified claims, we add another injury to a family already in pieces. Let the investigators investigate and the courts judge. Meanwhile, let neighbors be neighbors — present, sober, steady. 2) Make space for grief without turning it into a show. Grief needs casseroles and quiet prayers more than it needs social-media expertise. Families on both sides of a tragedy are still families. Leave them room to breathe and to bury. 3) Treat the home as the front line. Men — if anger is ruling your house, it's time to get help before the officers arrive. Women — if you are in danger, call. There are advocates and orders of protection; use them. (If you're reading this and unsure where to start, ask a pastor, a counselor, or an officer you trust tonight.) Kentucky's numbers tell us this isn't a "someone else" problem. It's all of us. 4) Put Christ at the center of any "solution." Rehabs can do real good. They teach structure, buy time, and sometimes keep a man alive long enough for truth to reach him. I have seen that. But rehabs are last-resort hospitals; they are not new-heart factories. A program can interrupt a pattern; only Christ can forgive sin, break slavery from the inside, and rebuild a person who can love again. When we build responses that ignore Him, we shouldn't be surprised when the cycle resumes—clean for a season, then back to the bottle, the needle, or the rage. 5) Ask more of our churches than another Sunday. We do not need perfect churches. We need present ones. A church that opens its doors on a Tuesday night

for a small group of exhausted dads and frightened moms will save more futures than any viral post ever will. A church that pairs mentors with our young men will spare our county countless 3 a.m. calls. If the headlines are about murder and fentanyl, let the quiet headlines be about men learning gentleness and families learning reconciliation. 6) Hold both justice and mercy. House Bill 5 promises sternness; our county also needs mercy that calls people by name and still tells them the truth. Justice without mercy hardens a community. Mercy without justice invites more harm. Together, they are the rails that keep us from the ditch. In the last month, we've watched a murder case in Falmouth, a drug seizure in Maysville, and a fatal crash on KY-10. You can read those as three separate stories. Or you can read them as one: We are a people in need of anchors that hold. The data says overdoses are falling — in Kentucky and across the country. That is real progress. But a falling number will not comfort a mother who lost her daughter or a child who fears the next outburst at home. Progress matters. People matter more. So here is my ask of Falmouth: Be the place where truth is told without cruelty, where churches act like hospitals for the soul, where men repent before they destroy what they love, and where we build habits that last longer than the news cycle. Let the courtroom do its work. Let our community do ours. If we do, the next time tragedy knocks, it may still break our hearts—but it won't break our town. Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."

Tackett is a 2016 graduate of Pendleton County High School. He publishes as I. Scott Tackett — The Watchman.

Opioid funds awarded to local groups

By Jim Thaxton

FALMOUTH —The Pendleton County Opioid Advisory Board completed its first round of funding, awarding \$35,000 of funding requests filed with the county Fiscal Court. The money comes as part of a nationwide settlement stemming from litigation against opioid manufacturers and distributors. It is to support programs aimed at prevention, treatment and recovery related to substance use disorders. "This first RFP (request for proposal) round is a major step in getting resources into the hands of those who can make a difference on the ground," said David Fields, Pendleton County Judge Executive. "Working with the Opioid Advisory Board is a result of a collaborative commitment to transparency, community input and evidence-based strate-

gies as we work to reduce the impact of opioid use in our county." The advisory board and the Fiscal Court awarded funding to: • The Gathering Wing, \$13,500, to support the development of recovery housing, offering individuals a stable environment as they work toward long-term sobriety and reintegration; • Grassy Creek Christian Church, \$13,500, to provide student stipends for its new preschool program, helping local families access early childhood education in a supportive, faith-based environment; • Three Rivers District Health Department, \$8,000, to fund incentives for hepatitis C testing and treatment by increasing access to care and treatment through incentivized participation and follow-up through collaboration with Harrison Memorial Hospi-

tal. "These projects represent a broad but connected approach to prevention and healing in our community," said Stephanie Green, director of Pendleton County Champions and Opioid Advisory Board. "From recovery housing to preschool support to critical health services, we are investing in the full spectrum of care, while keeping resources in Pendleton County." The next round of funding applications will open Jan. 1. Community organizations, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and service providers with innovative ideas to prevent substance use, support recovery or improve community health may apply. Application guidelines will be available later this year on Pendleton County's website, or contact Green at pcchampionsco@gmail.com for more information.

Hilltop Presents the Pendleton County Schools

ACADEMIC STUDENT OF THE MONTH

PCHS Student of the Month for Aug. 2025

Name: Jayden Ford

SON OF: Melvin Ford

Grade: 11th

We are proud to recognize Jayden Ford as this month's Career and Technical Education Student of the Month.

A multi-talented student, he has spent the last two years on the football field and more than six on the baseball field. Currently enrolled in four CTE classes, he is on track to complete the Marketing Pathway this year. Outside of class, he is learning the art of barbering and plans to pursue a career as a barber in the future. His kindness, fun personality, and ability to work well with others makes him a true role model for his peers and an outstanding representative of our CTE program.

Congratulations, Jayden, on this well-deserved recognition! Keep striving for excellence.

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