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El police officer placed on leave after controversial social media post

KATHLEEN HOPEWELL NEWS-TIMES Sep 17, 2025 Updated Sep 18, 2025 16

EMERALD ISLE — Emerald Isle's Advanced Police Officer Travis Carroll has become embroiled in reactions to social media posts circulating on the internet in the aftermath of Charlie Kirk's assassination, which took place Sept. 10 during a forum with students at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah.

Carroll was placed on administrative leave as a result of a social media comment made from a personal account.

Though the source of the post where Carroll left the comment resulting in his administrative leave is unclear, his comment reads:

"I think perhaps you're not seeing the other side of it. When Nancy Pelosi's husband got attacked and hospitalized in his home, Republicans were laughing, high fiving and doing backflips, hell, it wasn't just [two] months ago they were laughing and high fiving about feeding immigrants to alligators. Who were ALSO fathers, mothers, and brothers. Not to mention Charlie also being openly racist. So you can imagine, while the act is horrific, certainly he ain't (sic) really winning in the empathy department."

Carroll's comment received widespread attention following disclosure by a well-known right-wing account on X, formerly known as Twitter, @LibsofTikTok. The account's owner, Chaya Raichik, is known to share controversial views. Raichik's @LibsofTikTok account is a politically charged manner to her 4.4 million followers. Content posted from the influential account has been attributed to at least 21 bomb threats made to various institutions and individuals.

The post, made on Sept. 15, read, "Travis Carroll, a police officer for Emerald Isle, NC, allegedly made a post online DMSARNG Charlie Kirk after he was ass**ssinated [...] Our tax dollars pay his salary."

They also tagged Emerald Isle's official account, asking for the town's thoughts. The post accrued over 8,000 likes, and nearly 4,000 reposts, and prompted a variety of comments. Some users called for Carroll's termination and urged others to demand a response from the town, but even more asserted that Carroll's comment acknowledged the wrongfulness of Kirk's death and did not warrant being fired.

The Town of Emerald Isle made a statement on their official Facebook page Tuesday afternoon, underlining that Carroll's post was not made in connection with official town pages, nor was it condoned by the town and the E.I. Police Department.

Chief of Police Michael Panzarella identified himself as author of the statement, noting that he was, "committed to ensuring that all concerns are reviewed promptly and fairly," and that the matter was, "under investigation to determine the facts, origin, and motivation associated with the post, and whether its content is consistent with departmental standards and expectations."

The statement said Carroll had been, "placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation."

Town Manager Frank Rush responded to the Carteret News Times' request for comment, stating, "Please know that we take this issue extremely seriously, as it has significant consequences for our community, our organization, and our police department."

He continued, "We are not considering the political implications in reviewing this issue, and any decisions made will be based solely on the facts, applicable (with) town policy, applicable federal and state law, and many other important operational and community considerations."

APO Carroll was recognized by the town in August 2024 for being the first Emerald Isle Police Officer to achieve a Physical Fitness Instructor Training certificate through the North Carolina Justice Academy.

"This two-week specialized course certifies law enforcement instructors to administer physical fitness assessments, prepare exercise prescriptions and design specialized fitness programs, advise students on basic nutrition, and effectively counsel and motivate other officers/students to continue in an exercise program utilizing this science-based concepts (NSA)," the post read.

In the days following Kirk's assassination, Raichik has targeted more than 130 individuals for their comments on Kirk's death, demanding their terminations from their jobs via X posts. Among those identified are teachers, professors, politicians, police officers, firefighters or military, as well as members of Congress and the Secret Service. In some cases, the phone numbers and emails of the individuals' employers were included in the posts. In apparent reaction to their social media comments, some of the individuals identified by @LibsofTikTok have either been fired or placed on leave from their jobs.

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TheDude Sep 18, 2025 8:04am

So much for free speech. Pelosi's husband being attacked was horrific and so was Charlie Kirks assassination. It's not something to pick sides on or celebrate. This is a non-argument.

We cannot normalize hating each other, this is exactly what our enemies want. These foreign threats can kick back while we eat each other alive. I never thought people could fall for such and obvious trick. They want us divided, and it seems they're winning.

With that being said, if you work in a position where sex dolls pay your salary, you should probably not post everything that goes through your head. Do I agree with this? Not really, but it's the reality we live in. We want to feel like the guys who could potentially ruin your life at a traffic stop are unbiased as possible.

But who would trust the Republican party was actually the big government party? thought it was just the democrats that wanted to control everything you think and speak? I'm not saying these political parties are cuts. I'm just saying if I wanted a successful call I'd rule it like these guys. Unfortunately, I'm not cut from that cloth. 😢 But seriously, the only way to combat this is questioning your algorithms that feed you your daily echo chamber slop that releases that sweet satisfying dopamine. Step outside. Love your neighbor. Actively find something to that helps your community. Tell the media you're done listening and you're tired of hating each other.

I don't often quote scripture because I'm just a man. I don't think I'm better than anyone else. But in these times, the following verses come to mind. Isaiah 1:17 "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." - This doesn't just apply to the people you like. In John 1:14 " It says Jesus came full of grace and truth. I think in the search of "truth" we've collectively lost all since of "grace". Let's be kind to one another even if someone is not kind back. 🙏

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greenfishb3a3fe27fce57a82a8a2 Sep 22, 2025 3:01pm

Thank You for your reply to the situation. I agree with you.

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kenwood12 Sep 18, 2025 8:30am

Officer Carroll's comments clearly were not meant to incite, but to place a happening in context. He did not slander or use foul language. So why the hullabaloo? Could it be that Trump has used the shooting of Kirk as a political tool, to advance his own sick agenda, with all his followers, including the media, gladly falling in line? The press, and here I even include the News Times, rails against the suppression of free speech. That is until the "free speech" reflects, even in the slightest way, an opinion that does not support that same sick agenda. Witness the firing of Jimmy Kimmel. Witness the Republican outlets that express disagreement's with his policies. Law suites meant to suppress that very same free speech.

Kirk's death, as tragic as it was, should be open for discussion, particularly considering how much Trump has capitalized on it, both in words and deed.

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greenfishb3a3fe27fce57a82a8a2 Sep 22, 2025 3:08pm

Spot On, Mr Wood!

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mpjorp Sep 18, 2025 10:18am

For us Christians, "You don't speak ill of the dead."

Free speech doesn't prevent you from being fired if you're stupid and have poor judgment.

NC is a right-to-work state. That means the door swings both ways, and you can quit or be fired at will.

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bkrmkw64 Sep 18, 2025 1:38pm

Free speech is not free from the consequences of that speech. Employers do also have rights in regard to who they employ and have the right to terminate employees for conduct they deem inappropriate.

However, in this particular case I don't view the officer's comments as being offensive and they certainly weren't celebrating Charlie Kirk's murder. People need to stop being offended by everything people they disagree with say. This used to be something liberals needed to do, now apparently it has become conservatives as well. That's very unfortunate as it seems both sides increasingly view freedom of speech as only fully applying to speech that they approve of.

After all, free speech isn't really free if you have to worry about losing your job because of a comment posted on social media in your free time. Egregiously offensive comments are another matter and that is where employer rights come into play, but people need to understand there is a difference between disagreeing with what someone says and being offended by it. If you were offended by the officer's comments, maybe you need to take a look at some of the genuinely awful and offensive things that have been said by others and realize you're being a bit of a snowflake.

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mpjorp Sep 18, 2025 3:24pm

The officer's comments show us nothing about Charlie but plenty about the person making the comments and the folks who support his remarks.

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Mr. Tom Slick Sep 18, 2025 4:32pm

Well I can tell ya for one concerned citizen here in Carteret County, this chap needs to be fired!!

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Dak Sep 18, 2025 5:06pm

How quickly the right came to love cancel culture.

But agreed, freedom of speech isn't freedom from the consequences of that speech, at least outside of the government. The government is the one who can't act against you based on your freedom of speech.

All of these events are horrific tragedies. But being tragically killed does not magically make this man a saint. He was not.

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Doug C Sep 18, 2025 6:45pm

This is not about free speech. It's about being an employee. Police officers, just like the military, are held to a higher standard. Their words must uphold neutrality and public trust.

This isn't about silencing opinion—it's about whether an officer's comments undermine confidence in his ability to treat all citizens fairly. When trust is eroded, the whole department is affected.

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bkrmkw64 Sep 19, 2025 3:00pm

I can agree with that in general. If I were in his position I would have avoided making public comments on such a divisive issue and just let it lie. But that does touch on the issue of people being way too easily offended by statements they disagree with. It'll be different if the Officer would have posted something celebrating Charlie Kirk's death but he didn't so I don't get why anyone would assume he's incapable of being neutral in his job because he posted an opinion that they do. Personally, I think these LibsofTikTok people need to get a life and mind their own business, the same way the liberal cancel culture warriors do.

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mpjorp Sep 19, 2025 7:53am

I see many people backtracking, apologizing, or clarifying their negative comments about Charlie Kirk, especially those who have been suspended or fired from their jobs.

Some say, "Measure twice, cut once." Others say, "Think twice, speak once." Good advice for us all.

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El Machistero Sep 19, 2025 11:58am

I oppose all political violence, period. Charlie Kirk embodied free speech. I do not agree with much of what he said, but defend his right to say it. He posted "Hate speech does not exist in America. There's only speech. There's gross speech. There's evil speech. And ALL of it is protected by the First Amendment."

This first Amendment applies to me, you, Charlie Kirk, Chaya Raichik and to Advanced Police Officer Travis Carroll. It means that Officer Carroll has the constitutional right to express his personal opinion, while he is off duty. It means that the Emerald Isle's decision for placing Officer Carroll on Administrative Leave and trial that this case will be resolved immediately. The same constitution and laws that protect free speech also contain libel remedies which allow people who are actually damaged by said free speech to seek compensation from their accuser. Officer Carroll seems to have a valid case against Ms Raichik.

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mpjorp Sep 19, 2025 2:41pm

Some folks don't know the difference between hate speech and free speech.

The First Amendment protects you from the government censoring your speech. Let me repeat, the First Amendment applies only to restrictions imposed by the government.

Private companies aren't the government. If a private employer fires an employee because of the employee's speech, there is no First Amendment violation. There is likewise no violation if a private university expels a student for what the student said.

If you can't tell the difference, maybe a civics class is in order.

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Dak Sep 19, 2025 11:07pm

This is one of the very few things I can agree with you about mpjorp. You're spot on.

Cancel culture isn't great or admirable in any way, but it's completely legit, regardless of what side is doing it.

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Trutheseker1775 Sep 24, 2025 6:24am

Well, in the should be fired officer's mind, he would be justified killing you if he didn't like your speech. Getting pulled over by him could be your death. No different than Charlie Kirk be killed for his speech.

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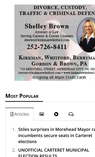

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