

Data breach exposes financial support from police officers for fascist shooter Rittenhouse

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16 April 2021

A data breach at the Christian fundraising platform GiveSendGo has exposed the names of public officials and police officers, who donated money for the defense of fascist teenage shooter Kyle Rittenhouse and other extreme right-wing causes.

Many of the individuals who made contributions also submitted written messages of support along with their donations. They were identified because they used their official email addresses to make their submissions on the GiveSendGo crowdfunding website. Although the contributors attempted to conceal their identities by listing themselves as “anonymous” donors, their email addresses were captured by the site server and downloaded during the data breach.

The GiveSendGo data set was provided by hackers to data transparency activists at Distributed Denial of Secrets (DDoSecrets), who then shared the information with journalists at the *Guardian* and The Hill. According to a description of the data set on the DDoSecrets website, it includes, “Donor information for every campaign on the ‘Christian fundraising platform’ GiveSendGo, best known for being used by far-right extremists like the Proud Boys. The site has allegedly also been used to fund and defend insurrectionists who were involved in the January 6 coup attempt, as well as those pushing claims of election fraud.”

One example published by the *Guardian* is a donation of \$25 made in support of Kyle Rittenhouse on September 3 from an email address associated with Sgt. William Kelly, the executive officer of internal affairs at the police department in Norfolk, Virginia. The donation was accompanied by a message that reads, “God bless. Thank you for your courage. Keep your head up. You’ve done nothing wrong. Every rank and file police officer supports you. Don’t be discouraged

by actions of the political class of law enforcement leadership.”

On August 25, then 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse traveled from his home in Antioch, Illinois to Kenosha, Wisconsin to volunteer as a member of an armed militia in the midst of growing protests against the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old black man, in front of his children two days earlier. Later that night, Rittenhouse fired his AR15-style rifle numerous times during confrontations with protesters, killing two men and seriously injuring a third.

Based on video evidence and eyewitness descriptions, the shooter was charged with five felony counts, including first-degree intentional homicide in the death of Anthony Huber, 26; first-degree reckless homicide in the death of Joseph Rosenbaum, 36; and attempted first-degree intentional homicide against Gaige Grosskreutz, 26, who was struck by a bullet in the bicep and survived.

Rittenhouse turned himself in the following morning after driving back to Antioch the night before and was held for two months in the local jail until his extradition to Kenosha on October 30. From the start, Rittenhouse was hailed by the far right as a hero and backed by President Donald Trump. Several organizations launched a national fundraising campaign for his legal defense and raised the \$2 million required for Rittenhouse to post bail at his arraignment on January 5 where he pled not guilty to all charges.

The GiveSendGo website still hosts details of the Rittenhouse campaign, which says it was launched by friends of the family. A total of \$585,940 was raised by the crowdfunding site, and it includes a statement by the fascist attorney Lin Wood. A leading figure in the effort to mobilize support for teenage fascist and, along with Trump, a proponent of the claim that the shooter

was acting in “self-defense,” Wood makes the claim that Rittenhouse is a “political prisoner.”

Another campaign exposed by the data breach is the effort to raise money and build support for Rusten Sheskey, the Kenosha police officer who shot Jacob Blake in the back seven times on August 23. The “Support Rusten Sheskey” crowdfunding campaign on the GiveSendGo platform raised thousands of dollars from dozens of donors most of whom used private email addresses.

However, the *Guardian* reported that “Two \$20 donations to Sheskey’s fund were associated with email addresses of a pair of lieutenants in Green Bay, Wisconsin’s police department. One, given under the name, “GBPDP Officer,” was tied to an address associated with Chad Ramos, a training lieutenant in the department; another anonymous donation was associated with Keith A. Gehring, who is listed as a school resources officer lieutenant.

A third donation was connected with the official email address of Officer Pat Gainer of the Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin police department, and under the screen name “PPPD Motor 179,” a message was included which said, “Stay strong brother.” In the end, the Kenosha County District Attorney declined to bring charges against Sheskey, and the officer returned to the police force on March 31.

Other campaigns with anonymous donations on GiveSendGo came from city employees of Houston, Texas, who opposed the actions of the police chief, Art Acevedo, who fired four Houston cops in April 2020 after they shot and killed Nicolas Chavez, who was on his knees and suffering from a mental health crisis. The *Guardian* reports that a \$100 donation was associated with the email address of Samuel Peña, the city fire chief, who had previously stated publicly that he supported Acevedo.

Another anonymous donation of \$400 was attributed to an email linked to Chris Andersen, an author and 39-year veteran of the Houston police department, that carried the comment: “I think that Chief Acevedo is part of the ‘unrecognized form of police corruption’ that Chris Anderson [sic] wrote about in his book.’ Hang in there guys!!!”

The revelation that there is support for fascists like Rittenhouse and campaigns to defend officers involved in police violence and murder comes as no surprise. It

was reported in October by NBC News, for example, that federal law enforcement officials were directed to make public comments sympathetic to Rittenhouse. The memo also included a series of talking points distributed by Homeland Security officials that aimed to counter the media presentation of the fascist group Patriot Prayer as “racists.”

Meanwhile, it has been established as fact that a substantial percentage of the right-wing mob that attacked the US Congress on January 6 were former or current law enforcement officers or active or retired US military personnel. Additionally, at least two leaders of the fascist Proud Boys organization—Enrico Tarrío and Joseph Biggs—were active FBI informants at the time of the January 6 coup attempt.

Along with previous exposures of participants in white supremacist and neo-Nazi organizations within the ranks of the US military, the GiveSendGo revelations provide concrete evidence that support for right-wing and fascist political movements is active and widespread in US law enforcement at the national, state and local levels.



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