

## **It's time for a Turning Point...**

Today Oregon's conservatives, business interests, independents and libertarians find themselves in the minority facing a majority that is resistant to giving our voices a seat at the table and unwilling to consider any policy that is put forth in support of our interests. We now find ourselves facing significant challenges to our personal rights, our opportunities to provide and seek employment, and even failure to support the transportation system that we all rely on.

It is time for Oregonians to take our state back. We must return it to the independent thinking collaborative state that invests in its people and its economy.

There are many seeds being planted right now focused on this effort, but it will be necessary to combine efforts, stand together, avoid duplication, move egos aside, invest in positive winning leadership and bring new tools to our state to take on the liberal machine controlled by state employee unions.

To provide a forum to bring together those that are committed to this effort and to introduce Oregon to a new concept that has changed the tide in other states around the country, we would like to invite you to dinner with Charlie Kirk from Turning Point USA (for additional information please see attached article). Turning Point USA is prepared to help us build a machine around youth engagement and campus activism.

**A hosted event has been scheduled for May 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM at the Salem Convention Center.**

Charlie and his colleagues will share the story of their success in other states and how it can be applied here in Oregon. **Please join your friends, colleagues and fellow Oregonians for an evening of learning, sharing and making connections to move our state in the right direction together.**

**We truly believe that it will take a new tools and a new generation of Oregonians to turn back the blue tide.**

*Jim Young*

**Please RSVP to Kim Medford at [kmedford@turningpointoregon.com](mailto:kmedford@turningpointoregon.com) or 503-853-4059**

# This Boy Wonder Is Building the Conservative MoveOn.org in an Illinois Garage

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Republican donors are counting on the 21-year-old to energize voters.

Charlie Kirk was just about to leave the 2012 Republican National Convention in Tampa when he spotted the multimillionaire investor Foster Friess in a stairwell. Kirk, who was 18 and fresh out of high school, had spent weeks memorizing the names and faces of the top 25 Republican political donors in case he found himself in just such a situation. He grabbed Friess into a handshake, took a nervous breath, and began his elevator pitch. Instead of going to college, he wanted to start a grass-roots organization to rival liberal groups such as MoveOn.org, which offer Democratic candidates a standing army of volunteer activists. All he needed, Kirk told Friess, was cash. Friess, who'd just blown \$2.1 million on a failed quest to help Rick Santorum win the GOP presidential nomination, handed over his business card. Three weeks later, Kirk had a five-figure check. "He impressed me with his capacity to lead, intelligence, and love for America," Friess says. "I instantly knew I wanted to support him."

In the three years since, Kirk—who still sleeps in his childhood bedroom in Wheeling, Ill.—has built his organization, Turning Point USA, into the go-to group for reaching young conservatives. It has a presence on 800 college campuses, where fieldworkers hand out posters and collect e-mail addresses. At the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in February, the group hosted an event featuring Senators Ted Cruz and Rand Paul, who have each since announced they're running for president. On May 8, Paul was scheduled to speak at a Turning Point rally at Arizona State University, and Carly Fiorina is on deck to speak in June at a Turning Point conference for women in Chicago. Kirk says he's met candidate Marco Rubio and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, who is considering a presidential run.



Photographer: Nicholas Kamm/AFP/Getty Images

Turning Point's stand at CPAC is pictured in February 2015.

Kirk's circle of financial backers has expanded to include Illinois Republican Governor Bruce Rauner; Montana-based technology entrepreneur Greg Gianforte, a donor to Christian causes; and Mike Miller, a suburban Chicago jeweler who's given Turning Point \$50,000. Kirk says he's raised \$1 million since January. (Because Turning Point is organized as a nonprofit advocacy group, it doesn't have to disclose its full donor list or budget.) During the CPAC convention, Friess and Miller entertained 100 Turning Point activists over dinner at Washington's Metropolitan Club. Kirk, Friess says, "is the ultimate role model for us all."

Turning Point displays at campus fairs are filled with colorful posters that cheer capitalism and boo big government. The most popular one right now spells out LOL, with the "O" styled after President Obama's iconic campaign logo. The group's field activists approach their duties with evangelical passion. When they reel in a curious student, out comes an electronic tablet with a questionnaire. "Where do you think the most cuts should be made in the budget?" asks one multiple-choice question. The options include defense, social programs, health care, environment, or "government itself." The survey concludes with a place for respondents to list their name, graduation year, and e-mail address.

Attracting interest is easy on campuses such as Texas Christian University. In April, Turning Point's Texas field coordinator Stephanie Conway, who moved to Dallas after graduating from Eastern Connecticut State University in 2014, set up a display in the student union. Dressed in a Turning Point T-shirt that read "Big Government Sucks," she asked passersby, "Hey, who wants to talk about the debt?" A surprising number of people bit, popping out their earbuds long enough to listen. "People love our message," she says. "We're giving them something to think

about—like, hey, maybe government is too big, maybe we shouldn't have this huge federal debt—that they probably haven't ever heard before in a college setting.”

Conway's team deployed heavier-duty tactics at the University of Texas at Arlington, a larger campus that's less right-leaning than Texas Christian. A staffer offered cupcakes: “These represent the federal debt. Take your share.” Others manning a dunk tank shouted carnival barker lines. “You can just go right up to the tank and push the lever,” said one, Tyler Bowyer. “There are no rules! Just like the federal government!”

The group's paid workers are each supposed to make at least 1,500 student contacts per semester. About 20,000 people have attended a Turning Point event, posted on social media, or volunteered for the group's events, Kirk says. Turning Point also registers voters in states that will be critical in 2016, including Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio. In April the group registered 1,030 voters in Florida—30 more than the goal, says national field director Crystal Clanton.

Turning Point's headquarters have moved out of Kirk's parents' house in Wheeling and into a garage in Lemont, southwest of Chicago. (“Apple and Amway also started in garages, so we're in really good company,” Kirk says.) Behind the scenes, Bill Montgomery, a 74-year-old former restaurateur, handles paperwork—“the old guy who keeps it all legal,” says Montgomery, who met Kirk in 2012 at a panel discussion on politics at Benedictine College. The young man gave a speech that was “practically Reaganesque,” Montgomery says. An Eagle Scout who played saxophone and baseball, Kirk gained national attention for an essay he wrote for the conservative Breitbart website about liberal bias in high school textbooks, which led to an appearance on Fox Business. With Montgomery urging him to dive into full-time political activism, Kirk traveled to Tampa, leading to his fateful chat with Friess.

Turning Point remains tiny compared with MoveOn, which has about 8 million members. MoveOn started in 1998 with an e-mail campaign asking people to sign a petition demanding that Congress censure President Bill Clinton and “move on” after the Monica Lewinsky scandal. MoveOn's success using the Internet to organize Democratic voters paved the way for Obama's 2008 campaign, a model Hillary Clinton is trying to replicate in her 2016 bid. Republicans haven't come close to matching that organizational muscle, Kirk says. When he pitches donors on Turning Point, he cheerfully describes it as “the MoveOn of the Right.” Now 21, he says it's helpful to have an example to follow. “I don't think I agree with them on a single issue,” he says. “But I have nothing but respect for how successful they've been.”