

# Florida Republican Gaetz offers intern job to fascist shooter Kyle Rittenhouse

Kevin Reed

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Just before jury deliberations were scheduled to enter a third day in the murder trial of Kyle Rittenhouse in the Kenosha County Courthouse, Florida Republican Congressman Matt Gaetz offered to hire the teenage vigilante shooter as an intern.

Speaking on video stream with the right-wing news website Newsmax on Wednesday evening, Gaetz said Rittenhouse “deserves a not guilty verdict, and I sure hope he gets it because, you know what, Kyle Rittenhouse would probably make a pretty good intern. We may reach out to him and see if he’d be interested in helping the country in additional ways.”

The 18-year-old Rittenhouse was charged with multiple counts of homicide, attempted homicide and reckless endangerment in the shooting deaths of Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, and Anthony Huber, 26, and the wounding of Gaige Grosskreutz in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on August 25, 2020.

Rittenhouse—who traveled from his hometown of Antioch, Illinois and volunteered as a member of a right-wing militia—fired his AR-15-style assault rifle eight times at the men after they confronted him. They were participants in the protests against police violence that had erupted two days earlier following the brutal shooting of Jacob Blake, an African American, by a white Kenosha police officer.

The job offer for Rittenhouse by Gaetz, an extreme right-wing US representative who has relationships with alt-right Holocaust deniers and is one of the foremost supporters in Congress of the coup-plotter Donald Trump, makes clear that the campaign to defend the teen shooter and lionize him as a “hero” has become a central theme in the evolution of the Republican Party into a fascist movement.

In his Newsmax interview, along with the internship offer for Rittenhouse, Gaetz denounced the sentencing

of January 6 rioter Jacob Chansley, who wore a furry headdress with horns and was one of the first individuals to enter the Capitol as part of the mob assault on the Capitol that resulted in the death of five people. Gaetz claimed the “QAnon Shaman” was “a relatively harmless, nonviolent vegan” and that the 41-month prison sentence was to “settle some sort of political score.”

The third day of deliberations by the jury in the Rittenhouse trial on Thursday ended with no verdict. Legal experts have said that a long deliberation in the case is not a surprise and does not indicate one way or the other how the jury may decide on the five remaining felony charges against Rittenhouse.

The jury spent an hour reviewing two videos of the events immediately leading up to the shooting of Rosenbaum by Rittenhouse, the first, an infrared recording by an FBI surveillance aircraft above Kenosha, and the second, a drone video shot from a block away.

The evidence in the videos, as presented by the prosecution, shows Rittenhouse pointing his assault rifle at Rosenbaum, prompting Rosenbaum to chase Rittenhouse into the parking lot of the CarSource used car dealership. With Rosenbaum closing in on Rittenhouse, the teenager turns around and shoots his pursuer four times.

As lead prosecutor Assistant District Attorney Thomas Binger explained in his closing arguments, by pointing his assault rifle at Rosenbaum, Rittenhouse cannot claim self-defense, “You cannot hide behind self-defense if you provoked the incident,” Binger said. “If you created the danger, you forfeit the right to self-defense.”

The significance of Rittenhouse pointing his weapon at Rosenbaum has also been focused in on by the

defense which filed a second motion for a mistrial on Wednesday over the drone video. Defense attorney Corey Chirafisi argued that the prosecution provided the defense with a compressed low-resolution version of the video and said, “We would have done this case in a little bit different manner.”

The prosecution told the court that the low-resolution version of the video was transferred accidentally from one smartphone to another and the jury was able to see the high-resolution version of the video during closing arguments and during the deliberations on Wednesday.

An earlier mistrial motion was filed by the defense on the grounds that the prosecution violated Rittenhouse’s Fifth Amendment rights by referring to the fact that he was tailoring his testimony to what he heard other witnesses say prior to him taking the stand.

Judge Bruce Schroeder, who has intervened persistently both pretrial and during the trial to suppress any reference to the political ideology and affiliations of Rittenhouse with right-wing and fascist elements, has yet to rule on either of the mistrial motions. Legal experts have said that it is both highly unusual for the defense to file more than one mistrial motion and for the judge to postpone ruling on them.

There can be no other interpretation of Judge Schroeder’s refusal to rule on the first defense motion—as the jury enters a fourth day of deliberations—other than his desire to keep it in reserve should they decide on Rittenhouse’s guilt in a manner with which he disagrees and can overturn with a declaration of a mistrial.

Judge Schroeder further assisted the defense by submitting excessively complicated jury instructions—36 pages in length—that give a deliberately contradictory explanation of the relationship between provocation and the forfeiture of the right to self-defense. On the one hand, the judge told the jury that Rittenhouse had no “duty to retreat” while at the same time saying that a person who provokes someone—for example, by pointing a loaded weapon at them—may “lawfully act in self-defense” if they reasonably believe they are “in imminent danger of death or great bodily harm.”

On Wednesday morning, Judge Schroeder launched into a diatribe against news media reports of the trial, especially criticism over his barring of the use by prosecutors of the word “victim” to describe those shot

by Rittenhouse, his allowing Rittenhouse to select the final jurors from a raffle bowl and his refusal to rule on the first mistrial motion.

The judge said he would “think long and hard” about letting television media into the courtroom in the future. He said, “[i]t’s just a shame that irresponsible statements are being made,” referring to a story in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that quoted legal experts on his stalling on the mistrial motion.



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