

Project Veritas Loses Hundreds of Thousands of Followers Following James O'Keefe's Exit



James O'Keefe from Project Veritas speaks at the CPAC convention in National Harbor, Md., on March 1, 2019. (Samira Bouaou/The Epoch Times)



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Amid a war of words between [Project Veritas](#) board members and its founder, James O'Keefe, the organization's social media platforms have seen an exodus of followers this week.

On Monday afternoon (Feb. 20), O'Keefe announced in an online video that he is departing the organization after he was indefinitely suspended from his role as CEO and removed from the group's board. "None of this makes any sense, and why is this happening right now?" O'Keefe asked. "Those are the questions I have. I don't have answers."

Hours later, the Project Veritas board released a statement accusing O'Keefe of "financial malfeasance" by using donor money on "personal luxuries." It said that he spent \$14,000 of that money to meet someone to fix his boat, among other allegations.

With the announcement that O'Keefe would be leaving, the analytics website SocialBlade showed that Project Veritas lost about 250,000 Twitter followers over two days. On Feb. 19, Veritas had some 1.47 million followers, but the Twitter account is down to about 1.22 million as of today at around 11 a.m. ET, the analytics website shows.

The organization's YouTube channel lost a combined 60,000 followers on Feb. 20-21, SocialBlade data shows as of this morning.

Under a range of posts made by the organization—even those that are unrelated to O'Keefe's departure—Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook users expressed their displeasure with the organization's claims about its founder. At the same time, prominent conservative users called on others to unfollow Veritas and suspend donations unless O'Keefe is reinstated.

“This has to be some sort of record,” Collin Rugg, the co-owner of conservative news website Trending Politics, wrote on Twitter about the follower loss. “RIP Project Veritas.”

Earlier data published by SocialBlade showed that Project Veritas appears to have also lost Twitter followers earlier this month amid reports claiming O'Keefe was placed on unpaid leave.

The Epoch Times has contacted Project Veritas for comment but has not received a reply as of publication of this article.

What Was Said

Adding to Project Veritas's possible woes, O'Keefe said that he is the chief fundraiser for the organization and would frequently travel around the United States to solicit donations. However, in the video, O'Keefe stated that he's no longer allowed to fundraise for the group and signaled that he's essentially out of a job.

"So, currently, I have no job at Project Veritas," O'Keefe remarked. "I have no position here based upon what the board has done. So, I'm announcing to you all that today, on Presidents' Day, I'm packing up my personal belongings."

Hinting at what he will do next, the founder said that "our mission continues on. I'm not done ... the mission will perhaps take on a new name, and it may no longer be called Veritas, Project Veritas. I will need a bunch of people around me, and I'll make sure you know how to find me."

In a statement released on Monday, the organization's board of directors said it had uncovered "financial malfeasance" and accused O'Keefe of spending "an excessive amount of donor funds in the last three years on personal luxuries."

According to the group, those included “\$14,000 on a charter flight to meet someone to fix his boat under the guise of meeting with a donor;” \$60,000 in losses from dance events; more than \$150,000 “in Black Cars in the last 18 months;” and others.

The statement added that O’Keefe had been suspended in recent weeks. It said he was invited to meet with the board to discuss financial issues and staff retention and morale, but he ignored the entreaty and “today ... decided to remove his belongings from Project Veritas headquarters.”



In this image from video, Pfizer Director of Research and Development Dr. Jordon Walker speaks about mutating COVID-19. (Courtesy of Project Veritas)

The announcement comes after the Veritas executive director and several board members put out a statement last week saying that “a number of our staff members provided leadership with some verbal feedback describing real management concerns regarding the treatment of people and our internal processes.”

In the video, O'Keefe noted that the alleged action that was taken against him by Project Veritas's board came after his organization published a video in which a Pfizer executive, Jordon Walker, appeared to say that his company is looking to mutate COVID-19 to possibly “preemptively develop new vaccines.”

Pfizer issued a response to the comments from Walker on Jan. 28, saying: “In the ongoing development of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, Pfizer has not conducted gain of function or directed evolution research.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.