



A Union of Professionals

## AFT News Release

**For Immediate Release**  
**September 29, 2017**

**Contact:**  
**Media Affairs**  
**202-879-4458**  
[AFTPress@aft.org](mailto:AFTPress@aft.org)  
[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

### **AFT Michigan Files Civil Complaint Against James O’Keefe’s Project Veritas, Alleging Illegal Surveillance**

*AFT President Randi Weingarten: These “operatives will stop at nothing to smear their ideological opponents—deception, distortion and dirty tactics—all to advance a political agenda that undermines public school students, teachers and families.”*

**DETROIT**—A circuit court judge has signed an [emergency restraining order](#) that prevents Project Veritas, a conservative hit group that uses deception and lies to attack its political opponents, from using illegally obtained information to smear Michigan children, teachers and families.

AFT Michigan on Thursday filed a [civil complaint against Project Veritas and its operative Marisa Jorge](#) for their fraudulent, unauthorized and unlawful surveillance of AFT Michigan staff, leaders and associates, and for gathering information from them. In response to the complaint, Judge Brian Sullivan of Michigan’s Third Judicial Circuit Court issued a temporary restraining order prohibiting Jorge, her agents and anyone acting in concert with her from releasing private and confidential information gathered from any unlawful surveillance.

It is believed to be the first time Project Veritas, founded by conservative activist James O’Keefe, has been subject to such an order in its near decade-long existence.

Jorge used fraud and deception under the alias "Marissa Perez" to secure an internship with AFT Michigan, ostensibly to obtain material Project Veritas could use in one of its infamously misleading hit videos, according to the complaint. Jorge falsely claimed to be a student at the University of Michigan interested in becoming a teacher when, in fact, she is a recent graduate of Liberty University and appears to be working for Project Veritas. The restraining order is against Jorge as well as “her agents, employees and those acting in concert,” which would include Project Veritas, also named in the complaint.

---

The American Federation of Teachers is a union of 1.7 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten  
PRESIDENT

Loretta Johnson  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mary Cathryn Ricker  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • T: 202-879-4458 • F: 202-879-4580 • [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

AFT Teachers • AFT PSRP • AFT Higher Education • AFT Public Employees • AFT Nurses and Health Professionals



Project Veritas is funded by a constellation of conservative backers and has frequently targeted teachers unions. Indeed, O’Keefe recently vowed to use his puerile tactics in defense of embattled Education Secretary Betsy DeVos who, coincidentally, is from Michigan where this criminal infiltration occurred. Project Veritas has in the past received funding from the Trump Foundation.

O’Keefe has demonstrated his willingness to ignore both legal and ethical standards. Long before the Russian government propagated fake news and deceptive tactics to sway the 2016 presidential election, O’Keefe was assuming false identities and doctoring videos in his attempts to smear his ideological opponents.

AFT President Randi Weingarten says, “James O’Keefe and his operatives will stop at nothing to smear their ideological opponents—deception, distortion and dirty tactics—all to advance a political agenda that undermines public school students, teachers and families.

“When the rights of students are curtailed by our own secretary of education who has spent decades attacking, rather than supporting, public education, it is more important than ever to fight for the truth and for the promise of public education. We are grateful that the Michigan court has protected—at least for now—students, teachers and families in Michigan.”

AFT Michigan’s complaint is here:

[https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/complaint\\_aftmi\\_veritas\\_092717.pdf](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/complaint_aftmi_veritas_092717.pdf)

The temporary restraining order against Project Veritas and Marisa Jorge is here:

[https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/tro\\_aftmi\\_veritas\\_092817.pdf](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/tro_aftmi_veritas_092817.pdf)

Follow AFT President Randi Weingarten: <http://twitter.com/rweingarten>

###