

# Newsweek

## Trump Megadonor Robert Mercer Cutting Ties With Breitbart, Milo Yiannopoulos and Hedge Fund

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Robert Mercer, the wealthy donor behind Donald Trump's presidential campaign, announced Thursday that he is leaving the hedge fund Renaissance Technologies, where he is co-chief executive. He also said he will no longer support Milo Yiannopoulos, the controversial conservative media personality and blogger, and that he is selling his stake in the Breitbart News Network.

On Thursday morning, Mercer wrote to Renaissance Technologies investors and pension advisers that he plans to step down on January 1, 2018, according to *The New York Times*. The letter reportedly did not cite a reason.

In a separate statement that circulated Thursday, Mercer said he is distancing himself from Yiannopoulos. "I supported Milo Yiannopoulos in the hope and expectation that his expression of views contrary to the social mainstream and his spotlighting of the hypocrisy of those who would close down free speech in the name of political correctness would promote the type of open debate and freedom of thought that is being throttled on many American college campuses today," he said. "But in my opinion, actions and statements by Mr. Yiannopoulos have caused pain and divisiveness undermining the open and productive discourse that I had hoped to facilitate. I was mistaken to have supported him, and for several weeks have been in the process of severing all ties with him."

The statement came about a month after BuzzFeed published an in-depth article about Yiannopoulos and his reported ties to the white nationalist movement. The article described Mercer as the "patron" of Yiannopoulos and said the Mercer family had funded the efforts Yiannopoulos following his resignation from Breitbart in February over comments he made about pedophilia.

Mercer added in the statement that he is selling his stake in Breitbart, a right-wing website, to his daughters. One of his daughters, Rebekah Mercer, led a political action committee that supported Trump and served on Trump's presidential transition team. He also addressed his relationship with Steve Bannon, Trump's former chief strategist and the executive chairman of Breitbart, with whom the Mercer family is close. "I have great respect for Mr. Bannon, and from time to time I do discuss politics with him," he said. "However, I make my own decisions with respect to whom I support politically. Those decisions do not always align with Mr. Bannon's."

It was not immediately clear on Thursday how Mercer's leaving the hedge fund and selling his stake in Breitbart would impact his future as a major political donor. He has continued giving since the 2016 presidential election, including \$300,000 so far in 2017 to Kelli Ward, a physician and former Arizona state senator who is running in 2018 for the seat that United States Senator Jeff Flake now holds.

In 2017, Mercer has also contributed \$150,000 to the Massachusetts First political action committee, which has opposed Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren, and \$27,100 to the Black Americans for a Better Future committee, which The Intercept reported "appears to exist solely" to support a consultant who once accused former President Barack Obama of "relentless pandering to homosexuals." He has also given \$50,000 to the committee Remember Mississippi and at least \$4,950 to the Republican New York City mayoral candidate Nicole Malliotakis. Mercer is also helping Trump pay legal bills he's racked up in the investigations into Russian meddling and possible collusion with the Trump campaign.

Mercer, Bannon and people close to them have spoken with at least seven Republicans about running for Senate, the *Times* reported in September. Mercer met with Bannon just prior to his departure from the White House in August.

Outside of political campaigns and candidates, Mercer through his family foundation has awarded millions of dollars to groups, many of which are conservative, such as the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute and the Manhattan Institute.