



Broadcasters who criticized Jimmy Kimmel have deals pending before FCC

Nexstar wants to merge with TEGNA, and Sinclair is in the process of buying and selling TV stations — all of which require approval from the FCC.



Matthew Keys | September 18, 2025

Share:



The El Capitan Theatre in Los Angeles, where “Jimmy Kimmel Live” is filmed. (Photo by Matthew Keys for The Desk)

A pair of broadcast television station owners who decided to pre-empt new episodes of ABC’s “Jimmy Kimmel Live” on their stations have business-related transactions that are pending before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The broadcasters — Nexstar Media Group and Sinclair, Inc. — [said they would no longer air new episodes](#) of Kimmel's ABC program after FCC Chairman Brendan Carr complained about a monologue during an interview with a conservative podcaster on Wednesday.

In the interview, Carr took issue with Kimmel's monologue from Monday, during which he wrongly implied that the suspect involved in the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk was closely aligned with supporters of President Donald Trump. In the same monologue, Kimmel also scrutinized Trump's response to a reporter's question about the assassination, during which the president discussed the construction of a ballroom at the White House.

"Frankly, when you see stuff like this, I mean look, we can do this the easy way or the hard way," Carr said. "These companies can find ways to change conduct and take action, frankly, on Kimmel, or there's going to be additional work for the FCC ahead."

Carr's focused his remarks on ABC — he didn't mention Nexstar or Sinclair. Nonetheless, by Wednesday afternoon, both broadcasters issued public statements criticizing Kimmel's remarks and saying they would not air new episodes of his program on their ABC affiliates for the foreseeable future. [ABC eventually put Kimmel's show on hiatus](#).

The moratorium affects around 30 primary or secondary ABC affiliates owned by Nexstar, and another 30 ABC affiliates owned by Sinclair. Together, the two broadcasters own the largest number of ABC affiliates in the country.

In recent months, both broadcasters have announced their intent to buy or sell local TV assets — Nexstar is in the process of [effectuating a \\$6 billion merger with peer broadcaster TEGNA](#), and Sinclair is executing on a mixture of [station acquisitions and sales](#) — all of which require the approval of the FCC.

Carr has already complicated the business affairs of the country's three biggest broadcast networks: Over the past few months, Carr [has sent letters to the top executives of ABC and NBC's parent companies](#) demanding information about their diversity programs, and stonewalled the agency's decision on a merger between CBS

owner Paramount and Skydance Media until the FCC received assurances about their news operations.

It isn't clear if Carr will be as influenced by Nexstar and Sinclair's public grandstanding on the Kimmel issue when it comes to their business dealings. When reached for comment via text last night, Carr responded to this reporter with a GIF commonly known as "Evil Elmo," which shows the popular Muppet on fire.

He was more vocal about the situation on X (formerly Twitter) early Thursday morning.

"Broadcast TV stations have always been required by their licenses to operate in the public interest — that includes serving the needs of their local communities," Carr said. "And broadcasters have long retained the right to not air national programs that they believe are inconsistent with the public interest, including their local communities' values. I am glad to see that many broadcasters are responding to their viewers as intended."

At least one of Carr's FCC colleagues, Commissioner Anna Gomez, characterized the matter as government overreach — a case of a powerful administration official effectively censoring speech and expression that he didn't like.

"First, an ABC reporter was told that his coverage amounted to hate speech and that he should be prosecuted simply for doing his job. Then, the FCC threatened to go after this same network, seizing on a late-night comedian's inopportune joke as a pretext to punish speech it disliked," Gomez said. "That led to a shameful show of cowardly corporate capitulation by ABC that has put the foundation of the First Amendment in danger."

Gomez continued: "This FCC does not have the authority, the ability, or the constitutional right to police content or punish broadcasters for speech the government dislikes. If it were to take the unprecedented step of trying to revoke broadcast licenses, which are held by local stations rather than national networks, it would run headlong into the First Amendment and fail in court on both the facts and the law."

Gomez noted that Nexstar and Sinclair were almost certainly influenced by their pending business deal that require FCC approval when they publicly criticized Kimmel and threatened to ban his show from their ABC affiliates.

“The threat to revoke a license is no small matter. It poses an existential risk to a broadcaster, which by definition cannot exist without its license,” Gomez said. “That makes billion-dollar companies with pending business before the agency all the more vulnerable to pressure to bend to the government’s ideological demands. When corporations surrender in the face of that pressure, they endanger not just themselves, but the right to free expression for everyone in this country.”

There was a time when Carr likely saw things Gomez’s way.

“Should the government censor speech it doesn’t like? Of course not,” Carr wrote in a 2019 social media post. “The FCC does not have a roving mandate to police speech in the name of public interest.”

Never miss a story

Get free breaking news alerts and twice-weekly digests delivered to your inbox.

Subscribe!

We do not share your e-mail address with third parties; you can unsubscribe at any time.

ABC

Brendan Carr (FCC)

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

Nexstar Media Group

Sinclair Inc.

TEGNA

About the Author: Matthew Keys

Matthew Keys is the award-winning founder and editor of TheDesk.net, an authoritative voice on broadcast and streaming TV, media and tech. With over ten years of experience, he's a recognized expert in broadcast, streaming, and digital media, with work featured in publications such as StreamTV Insider and Digital Content Next, and past roles at Thomson Reuters and Disney-ABC Television Group.



TheDesk.net

TheDesk.net offers the latest news, analysis and commentary on the business of streaming media, broadcast TV and radio, advertising, measurement, journalism, tech and policy.

Email: news@thedesk.net

Publisher: [Matthew Keys](#)

TheDesk.net appreciates the support of readers who purchase products or services through specific links on our website. [Learn more...](#)

PARKS ASSOCIATES | FUTURE OF VIDEO
Business of Streaming

REGISTER NOW

Nov 18-20, 2025 in Marina del Rey, CA
#FutureVideo25 | www.futureofvideo.us

USE PROMO CODE: FOV25-DESK50

FOR 50% OFF REGISTRATION

Top Stories



Nexstar says no to Jimmy Kimmel, joining Sinclair in boycott

MSNBC, Sky News form global news partnership

Nexstar weighs returning "Jimmy Kimmel Live" to ABC affiliates

Kari Lake disparages news outlets covering USAGM layoffs

Monterey TV station abruptly shuts news department

Tenetic to integrate Comscore data into media intelligence systems

YouTube reverses ban on COVID-19 conspiracy theorists

EXPLORE

SUBSCRIBE

Introducing TIME100 AI 2025



VIEW MORE >

SEP 19, 2025 8:13 AM CT

From Firing Threats to Epstein Mentions, Here's a Look at the Fraught History Between Trump and Kimmel

POLITICS

DONALD TRUMP



Randy Holmes/Disney General Entertainment Content—Getty Images

by Callum Sutherland

REPORTER

President Donald Trump wasted little time in celebrating the “indefinite” suspension of *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* after the ABC show was pulled from air over comments host Kimmel made regarding the late Charlie Kirk.

“Great news for America. The ratings-challenged Jimmy Kimmel show is CANCELLED. Congratulations to ABC for finally having the courage to do what had to be done,” Trump said on Wednesday night, shortly after Kimmel’s suspension was announced. Trump went on to reference the cancellation of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, which was announced in July, and urged for other late-night hosts Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers to meet a similar fate.

Advertisement

The fallout has been swift and far-reaching. Kimmel’s fellow late-night hosts have rallied behind him, staunchly defending what they view to be his right to free speech, as have several of the celebrity guests who have featured on his show since its debut in 2003.

Read More: *Trump Addresses Jimmy Kimmel Suspension During U.K. State Visit*

Several Democratic lawmakers have also raised concerns over Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chair Brendan Carr’s push for the indefinite suspension of the show, and his subsequent comments that the FCC is “not done yet” with the changes in “the media ecosystem.” In fact, Carr has already said he’s eager to “look into” other shows, such *The View*, to see if they “still qualify as bona fide news programs and [are] therefore exempt from the equal opportunity regime that Congress has put in place.”

Following the fatal shooting of the influential conservative activist Kirk, and as the police continue to probe into specific motives of suspect Tyler Robinson, division between those with differing political affiliations seems to be on the rise. In light of Trump’s remarks over Kimmel, and with him and Vice President J.D. Vance encouraging a crackdown on what they perceive to be the “far-left,” some critics are accusing the Trump Administration of censorship.

Advertisement

In a conversation with reporters aboard Air Force One on Thursday, while travelling back from his U.K. state visit, Trump suggested that networks opposed to him should “maybe” lose their licences. “I have read some place that the networks were 97% against me, again, 97% negative, and yet I won and easily [in last year's election],” he said. “They give me only bad publicity [and] press. I mean, they're getting a licence. I would think maybe their licence should be taken away.”

While the conversation is expanding far beyond Trump and Kimmel, their long-standing feud is undeniably a focal point, and dates back long before the suspension of the latter's talk show. While Kimmel has, like many other late-night hosts, often lambasted Trump and other lawmakers in his opening monologue, there have been some escalations between the two that have transcended the small screen.

Here's a look at some of the previous instances whereby Trump and Kimmel have shared tense—and public—exchanges.

Advertisement

October 2015: Kimmel pokes fun at Trump for cancelling late-night appearance before the pair eventually sit down to speak

During Trump's first presidential campaign, the then-Republican candidate was set to appear on Kimmel's talk show, but cancelled at the last minute, according to the host.

“Last night, his people called and cancelled on us. They were a little bit cryptic as to why he cancelled. They said he has a major political commitment, but he did want me to relay the message to you that if he had been here, he would have been great,” Kimmel said. “But don't worry, tonight we're going to give everyone in the audience a basketball dipped in cologne so you can fully experience what it would have been like had Donald Trump been here.”

Trump appeared on the show two months later, with the two seemingly getting along despite the earlier signs of friction.

September 2017: Kimmel hits out at Trump over healthcare in the U.S.

Advertisement

Kimmel criticised Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, who first coined the “Jimmy Kimmel test” in May 2017 in response to criticisms from the comedian over access to healthcare for those with pre-existing conditions and proposed changes to access by the Trump Administration, such as the Graham-Cassidy bill.

Shortly after Kimmel’s remarks, Trump posted: “I would not sign Graham-Cassidy if it did not include coverage of pre-existing conditions. It does! A great bill. Repeal and replace.”



In response, Kimmel accused Trump of signing the bill to get rid of Barack Obama’s name from healthcare legislation.

Advertisement

“For Donald Trump, this isn’t about the Graham-Cassidy bill. It’s about getting rid of Obamacare, which he hates, primarily because Obama’s name is on it,” Kimmel alleged. “At this point he would sign anything if it meant getting rid of Obamacare.”

February 2018: Kimmel criticizes the Trump Administration over gun-safety laws

After a mass shooting at Parkland High School in Florida killed 17 people, Kimmel made a direct plea to Trump on what he thought needed to be done to address gun violence in the U.S.

Kimmel first played his audience a clip of Trump reacting to the shooting, in which the President said: "No parent should have to fear for their sons and daughters when they kiss them goodbye in the morning."

"Here's what you do to fix that... tell your buddies in Congress... all the family men who care so much about their communities, that what we need are laws, real laws, that do everything possible to keep assault rifles out of the hands of people who are going to shoot our kids. Go on TV and tell them to do that," Kimmel said.

Advertisement

After applause, the comedian continued: "That is a perfect example of the common sense you [Trump] said you were going to bring to the White House... Don't you dare let anyone say it's 'too soon to be talking about it,' you say that after every one of these fatal school shootings... children are being murdered."

March 2024: Trump offers harsh review of Kimmel's Oscar-hosting abilities mid-show. Kimmel proceeds to read it out live on-air

Toward the close of the Oscars ceremony in 2024, repeat host Kimmel announced that he wanted to share a "review" of his performance. But it hadn't come from one of the hundreds of TV critics avidly watching the show, instead it came from Trump.

"Has there ever been a worse host than Jimmy Kimmel at the Oscars? His opening was that of a less-than-average person trying too hard to be something which he is not and never can be," Kimmel read aloud, looking at Trump's social media post on his cell phone.

Advertisement

Trump signed off his less-than-stellar review with his trademark “Make America Great Again” slogan.

Kimmel hit back, referencing Trump’s high-profile hush-money trial. “Thank you for watching,” he said. “I’m surprised you’re still up, isn’t it past your jail time?”

The moment has become a talking point once more, as Trump posted a video of the Oscars clip on Thursday, amid much talk over Kimmel’s suspension.

“Just before [the] announcement of the Best Picture of the Year, [Kimmel] felt that he had to respond to a truth put out by me toward the end of the show,” Trump said, going on to claim that Kimmel’s wife and agent had “begged” him not to do it.

July 2025: Trump warns Kimmel he’s “next” after the cancellation of Colbert’s show. Kimmel responds by referencing Jeffrey Epstein

The cancellation of Stephen Colbert’s late-night TV talk show in July was said to be down to “financial reasons” but came soon after he ridiculed CBS’ parent company, Paramount, over its \$16 million legal settlement with Trump over the editing of a *60 Minutes* interview with Kamala Harris.

Advertisement

After Colbert’s cancellation, Trump took to Truth Social with a number of celebratory messages, claiming to know that Kimmel was “next” in the firing line.

“The word is, and it’s a strong word at that, Jimmy Kimmel is NEXT to go in the untalented late-night sweepstakes and, shortly thereafter, [Jimmy] Fallon will be gone,” Trump said. “These are people with absolutely no talent, who were paid millions of dollars for, in all cases, destroying what used to be great television. It’s really good to see them go, and I hope I played a major part in it!”

In response, Kimmel uploaded a screenshot of Trump’s post on his Instagram account with the caption: “I’m hearing you’re next. Or maybe it’s just another wonderful secret.” in reference to a birthday message allegedly written by the President to the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The letter and the allegations against Trump were first published by the Wall Street Journal, who Trump in response opened a lawsuit against. The White House has since strongly denied that Trump wrote Epstein the birthday note, but stopped short of calling the documents fake.

Advertisement

Kimmel had referenced the birthday note before, when Trump initially celebrated Colbert's cancellation.

The late-night host posted an image of himself and his family attending a "Good Trouble" protest. (The anti-Trump Administration nationwide protests that were held in honor of the late civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis.)

Kimmel and his family held placards that read "Make America Good Again" and "I wish we had a better President." But it was the comedian's caption that caught people's attention, as he made reference to the alleged Epstein note.

"Summer family vacation! #goodtrouble," Kimmel said, adding: "May every day be another wonderful secret."

Read More: [Jimmy Kimmel References Epstein as He Speaks Out Against Trump, Who Warns He's 'Next' in Late-Night TV Cancellations](#)

September 2025: Trump dismisses reporter's question over free speech concerns and claims Kimmel was "fired" for "lack of talent"

Advertisement

After initially celebrating Kimmel's suspension via his social media platform, Trump doubled down on his commentary about the talk show host during a press briefing in the U.K., held as part of his second state visit.

Trump was asked if "free speech [is] more under attack in Britain or America," by a reporter who directly mentioned the suspension of Kimmel.

About 10 Jimmy Kimmel supporters have gathered outside the studio on Hollywood Boulevard where his late-night TV show is taped. Gregg Donovan, 65, of Santa Monica, Calif., held a sign that said “Welcome Back Jimmy.”

“Today, free speech won,” Donovan said, speaking a few hours before the show’s on-air return. “I’m happy for Jimmy and wanted to welcome him back. Hollywood missed him.”



Aude Guerrucci/Reuters



Sept. 23, 2025

Katrina Miller



“Well, Jimmy Kimmel was fired because he had bad ratings more than anything else,” Trump claimed in response. “He said a horrible thing about a great gentleman known as Charlie Kirk... they should have fired him a long time ago. You can call that ‘free speech’ or not. He was fired for lack of talent.”

Must-Reads from TIME

- [Jimmy Kimmel Live! to Return Tuesday After Disney Lifts Suspension](#)>
- [Jimmy Kimmel References Epstein as He Speaks Out Against Trump, Who Warns He’s ‘Next’ in Late-Night TV Cancellations](#)>
- [Jimmy Kimmel Champions Free Speech and Calls Out Trump in Late-Night Comeback](#)>

READ MORE 

Sections

- [Home](#)[Climate](#)
- [Politics](#)[Ideas](#)
- [Health](#)[Entertainment](#)
- [AI](#)[Sports](#)
- [World](#)[Technology](#)



Search the web

DEADLINE

Donald Trump Blasts Stephen Colbert & Calls Him “Very Boring” In Late-Night Rant: “CBS Should Terminate His Contract”

Armando Tinoco

Wed, September 25, 2024 at 4:10 p.m. CDT

3 min read



UPDATED with Stephen Colbert’s response: Donald Trump loves to rant on social media and has recently gone after late-night show hosts, with Stephen Colbert being his latest target.

The former president of the United States went on a tirade against the comedian after watching him in a PBS interview.

More from Deadline

- Chappell Roan Says She's "Voting For F*cking Kamala," But No VP Endorsement & "F*ck Trump, For F*cking Real"
- Chappell Roan Clarifies Presidential Endorsement Comment After Backlash: "No, I'm Not Voting For Trump"
- Lynda Carter On Tonight's 'Geeks & Nerds For Harris' Event, Surprise Guests, Equal Rights & Joy Of VP's White House Bid

ADVERTISEMENT

"I briefly watched an interview of Stephen Colbert on highly government subsidized PBS, and found it fascinating for only one reason — Why would they be wasting time and the public's money on this complete and total loser?" Trump shared on Truth Social on Tuesday, September 24. "He is not funny, which he gets paid far too much to be, he is not wise, he is VERY BORING, and his show is dying from a complete lack of viewers."

Trump suggested that Fox News host Greg Gutfeld's late-night show "is killing him" in viewership.

"CBS should terminate his contract and pick almost anyone, right off the street, who would do better, and for FAR LESS MONEY," Trump continued. "Or I could recommend someone, much more talented, and smarter, who would do it for FREE!"

Trump ended his late-night rant taking a jab at Colbert's competitors saying, "The good news for Stephen is that the two DOPES on NBC & ABC are not much better than him!"

ADVERTISEMENT

Colbert's counterparts include Jimmy Fallon on *The Tonight Show* and Seth Meyers on *Late Night*, both on NBC, and Jimmy Kimmel on ABC.

**Donald J. Trump** 

@realDonaldTrump

I briefly watched an interview of Stephen Colbert on highly government subsidized PBS, and found it fascinating for only one reason — Why would they be wasting time and the public's money on this complete and total loser? He is not funny, which he gets paid far too much to be, he is not wise, he is VERY BORING, and his show is dying from a complete lack of viewers —Gutfeld, on cable, is killing him! CBS should terminate his contract and pick almost anyone, right off the street, who would do better, and for FAR LESS MONEY — Or I could recommend someone, much more talented, and smarter, who would do it for FREE! The good news for Stephen is that the two DOPES on NBC & ABC are not much better than him!



Donald Trump's Truth Social post about Stephen Colbert

On Wednesday's episode of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, the host hit back at Trump. "If you're wondering why Trump wrote in all caps that I am 'very

boring,' I am confident it is because during that PBS interview, I said this," he explained.



More in Entertainment



What to know about Jimmy Kimmel's return to his late-night TV show



The Canadian Press



Jude Law is 'surprised' this Steven Spielberg masterpiece wasn't 'a monster hit'



USA TODAY



The Big Bang Theory's new spin-off with returning stars shares exciting update



Digital Spy

Colbert shared a clip of the interviewer asking if he'd ever have Trump on the show, to which he quipped, "I've had him before, and he's kind of boring. So, no."

Colbert was recently featured in an interview on *PBS NewsHour*, where he was asked if he would have Trump as a guest on the CBS late-night show.

ADVERTISEMENT

"I've had him before, and he was kind of boring, so no," Colbert said. "I don't like to have people on the show who I don't think are going to be honest agents of their own ideas."

Stephen and Evie Colbert on family, food and the stories behind their ...



Trump has been fixated on late-night TV hosts recently. During a rally in Pennsylvania on Monday, September 23, he suggested that NBC bring Johnny Carson back to *The Tonight Show*. The problem with Trump's request is that Carson died in 2005.

"When I first ran in 2015 or was thinking about running I went on [Jimmy's] show, *The Tonight Show*, which is dying," Trump said at his rally. "They're all dying. Where is Johnny Carson? Bring back Johnny. It made you appreciate the greatness of Johnny Carson. These three guys are so bad."

Best of Deadline

- [2024 Premiere Dates For New & Returning Series On Broadcast, Cable & Streaming](#)
- [Who Is Joe Locke's Mysterious 'Teen' In 'Agatha All Along'? All The Clues So Far](#)
- [Everything We Know About Netflix's 'Peaky Blinders' Movie So Far](#)

Sign up for [Deadline's Newsletter](#). For the latest news, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

MaddowBlog

From The Rachel Maddow Show

[ALL MADDOWBLOG POSTS](#)[THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW](#)[FULL EPISODES](#)[PODCASTS](#)[RACHEL ON BLUES!](#)[< PREVIOUS POST](#)[NEXT POST >](#)

As Jimmy Kimmel returns to the air, Trump threatens to go after ABC (again)

Shortly before the comedian returned, the president suggested he's prepared to file another civil suit against ABC for airing speech he doesn't like.



Sept. 24, 2025, 8:54 AM CDT

By **Steve Benen**

Last week, after [ABC pulled](#) Jimmy Kimmel's late-night show from the air, Donald Trump [took a victory lap](#) of sorts lap online. The president, who'd railed against the comedian for years, said

Kimmel's show had been "cancelled," which the Republican characterized as "great news for America."

Like many of Trump's claims, this wasn't true: The show and its host had been put on ice, but there'd been no cancellation announcement. Indeed, this week, ABC agreed to bring back the host, and "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" [aired anew](#) on Tuesday night.

The president was apparently not pleased. [The New York Times reported](#):

'I can't believe ABC Fake News gave Jimmy Kimmel his job back,' he complained in a social media post, roughly an hour before Mr. Kimmel's show was set to air. Mr. Trump suggested that he might sue ABC over its reinstatement of Mr. Kimmel – 'I think we're going to test ABC out on this,' he wrote – and cited a \$16 million payment that the network made last year to settle a previous defamation lawsuit that he filed against ABC News.

Much of the president's [online harangue](#) was stale and tiresome: Trump called ABC "fake news"; he questioned Kimmel's ratings; and he criticized the host's talent.

He also, however, said the comedian "puts the Network in jeopardy by playing 99% positive Democrat [*sic*] GARBAGE." Trump didn't elaborate, but given the broader context and his [related recent rhetoric](#), this appeared to be a reference to the president's eagerness to [target networks' broadcast licenses](#) over speech he considers "[illegal](#)."

But it was the next part of the Republican's missive that was of particular interest:

[Kimmel] is yet another arm of the DNC and, to the best of my knowledge, that would be a major Illegal Campaign Contribution. I think we're going to test ABC out on this. Let's see how we do. Last time I went after them, they gave me \$16 Million Dollars. This one sounds even more lucrative. A true bunch of losers!

In case this wasn't obvious, in March 2024, ABC's George Stephanopoulos [used the term "rape"](#) when describing the verdict in E. Jean Carroll's civil lawsuit against Trump. The Republican filed a defamation lawsuit after Election Day, and the network later agreed to [contribute \\$15 million](#) to Trump's future presidential library and \$1 million in legal fees to Trump's lawyers.

It was a controversial decision – many [legal experts](#) said the Republican was [unlikely to prevail](#) – which the president routinely points to as proof of the media being out to get him. What's more, the unfortunate settlement has had the predictable effect of emboldening Trump, leading to [additional lawsuits against other major media organizations](#).

Now, evidently, the president is inclined to take *yet another* bite at the apple, claiming that Kimmel's comedy might be “illegal” (it's not) and the basis for a “test” legal case. Watch this space.



Steve Benen

Steve Benen is a producer for "The Rachel Maddow Show," the editor of MaddowBlog and an MSNBC political contributor. He's also the bestselling author of "Ministry of Truth: Democracy, Reality, and the Republicans' War on the Recent Past."

[PREVIOUS POST](#)

Democratic special election win makes life even harder for Republicans on Capitol Hill

[NEXT POST](#)

As Trump shifts his posture on Russia's war in Ukraine, be sure to read the fine print

[LATEST POST](#)

The three biggest flaws in Trump designating antifa a 'domestic terrorist organization'

Stephen Colbert

🕒 This article is more than **1 month old**

'The economics made it a challenge': CBS boss talks Stephen Colbert cancellation

As the Paramount-Skydance merger is made official, George Cheeks has finally spoken about the controversial decision to end *The Late Show* after 32 years



📷 Stephen Colbert. He called the \$16m paid by CBS's parent company to settle a lawsuit from Donald Trump a 'big fat bribe'. Photograph: CBS Photo Archive/CBS/Getty Images

Adrian Horton

Thu 7 Aug 2025 14.48 EDT

After much media consternation and criticism over the **cancellation** of The Late Show With **Stephen Colbert**, CBS chief has spoken up about the company's decision to end the television institution after 32 years.

Speaking at a **press conference** following the takeover of Paramount by the media conglomerate Skydance, George Cheeks, the chair of TV media at the company, attributed the cancellation to financial headwinds faced by the format.

"The challenge in late night is that the advertising marketplace is in significant secular decline," he said. "We are huge fans of Colbert, we love the show. Unfortunately the economics made it a challenge for us to keep going."

Cheeks added that as soon as Taylor Tomlinson, the 31-year-old former host of After Midnight, declined to return for another season in the slot formerly occupied by the Late Late Show with James Corden, he knew the network "couldn't stay in that daypart".

"I know [Skydance] is going to invest, but they're going to invest cautiously and wisely," he said, indicating a focus on primetime and sports.

Many had criticized the decision to cancel Colbert during a crucial window in the merger of Paramount and Skydance, which depended on approval from the Trump administration to proceed. The cancellation came just two days after Colbert publicly criticized his parent company's settlement with Trump over a "frivolous" lawsuit regarding a 60 Minutes interview with Kamala Harris. During one of his monologues, Colbert referred to the \$16m paid by Paramount to Trump a "big fat bribe" to approve the \$8.4bn merger.

Colbert's announcement that his show would end next year was met with an **outpouring of support from celebrities**, as well as **speculation** that the decision was another effort by Paramount to appease Trump as well as the Skydance head, Larry Ellison, who has close ties with the president.

But Cheeks said the decision was financial, following reports that the Late Show, which premiered in August 1993 with David Letterman as host, was losing upwards of \$40m a year. The late-night genre as a whole has faced significant financial challenges in recent years, with ad revenue plummeting 50% from just seven years ago. Cheeks declined to confirm how much the Late Show was losing, even as the ratings leader in the field for close to a decade, but said it was "significant" and in the "tens of millions of dollars".

“At the end of the day, it just wasn’t sustainable to continue,” he said.

Cheeks, who came up in late night at NBC, also said that the timing for the decision came down to contract renewals for crew, including writers and producers. “We were at a period from a production standpoint where every year seasonally, this is [when] we negotiate new deals for writers and producers,” he said. “In addition, this is going to be the third season of Colbert’s three-year deal. So, in order to do those deals, we were going to have to change the terms from what we traditionally are, September to August, to September to May.

“It was it incumbent upon me and us to make it clear to Stephen and his reps that this is where we were,” he added, noting that it was “too early to speculate” on what might replace the program in the 11.35pm ET time slot.

Colbert will continue to host the show four nights a week until April 2026.

BREAKING BUSINESS

Trump Angered By Late Night Host Seth Meyers' Contract Extension—Says He Wants To Find Out Why

By **Siladitya Ray**, Forbes Staff. Siladitya Ray is a New Delhi-based Forbes...[Follow Author](#)

Published Aug 27, 2025, 06:03am EDT, Updated Aug 27, 2025, 06:37am EDT

[Share](#) [Save](#) [Comment](#)[Add to Google](#)

Subscribe: Less than \$1.50/wk

[Sign In](#)**TOPLINE**

President Donald Trump attacked NBC and the host of “Late Night,” Seth Meyers, in a Truth Social post early on Wednesday, questioning the network’s decision to extend the comedian’s contract, a month after he cheered CBS’s cancellation of Stephen Colbert’s “The Late Show” and signaled other late-night talk show hosts were “next” in line for cancellations.

This is your last free article.

Subscribe today to keep reading. For only \$1.50/week, unlock a world of unlimited insights and benefits to help you connect, grow and make an impact.

Subscribe Now



Host Seth Meyers during the monologue on the Late Show.

LLOYD BISHOP/NBC VIA GETTY IMAGES

KEY FACTS

- In a post made early on Wednesday morning, Trump [wrote](#): “There is a sick rumor going around that Fake News NBC extended the contract of one of the least talented Late Night television hosts out there, Seth Meyers.”
- It is unclear what “rumor” the president is referring to, as NBC [announced](#) back in May that it was extending Meyers’ “Late Night” hosting deal through 2028.
- The president claimed that Meyers had “no ratings,” even as the show continues to [register](#) the strangest numbers in the 12:30 a.m. ET slot.

This is your last free article.

Subscribe today to keep reading. For only \$1.50/week, unlock a world of unlimited insights and benefits to help you connect, grow and make an impact.

Subscribe Now

- The president questioned NBC's decision to extend Meyers' contract and added, "I don't know, but I'll definitely be finding out!!!"
- It is unclear if this means Trump intends to probe the contract extension.



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SETH MEYERS' CONTRACT EXTENSION?

NBCUniversal announced the extension [during a media upfront in May](#), which will keep Meyers as the host of the "Late Night" show through 2028. The network's executive vice president of late night programming, Katie Hockmeyer, said: "Over the last 10 years, Seth has resonated with his audience night after night with a sharp monologue and established segments...We're so happy to continue this legacy franchise with Seth at the helm."

KEY BACKGROUND

Last month, CBS and Paramount executives [announced](#) the network will cancel Colbert's

This is your last free article.

Subscribe today to keep reading. For only \$1.50/week, unlock a world of unlimited insights and benefits to help you connect, grow and make an impact.

Subscribe Now

Trump or a response to Colbert's sharp criticism of Paramount's settlement. Earlier in July, Paramount announced it had reached a [\\$16 million settlement](#) with Trump to resolve a lawsuit he filed against the network over a CBS News 60 Minutes interview with former Vice President Kamala Harris that aired last year. A few weeks after the settlement and the Colbert cancellation announcement, Paramount's pending \$8 billion merger with Skydance was [approved](#) by the FCC.

WHAT HAS TRUMP SAID ABOUT OTHER LATE NIGHT HOSTS?

In a [Truth Social post](#) shortly after Colbert's cancellation announcement, Trump wrote: "I absolutely love that Colbert got fired. His talent was even less than his ratings." The president then added, "I hear Jimmy Kimmel is next."

FURTHER READING

[Trump Suggests ABC And NBC Should Lose Broadcast Licenses Over Negative Coverage Of Him](#) (Forbes)

[‘The Gloves Are Off’: Stephen Colbert Tells Trump ‘Go F— Yourself’ After Show Canceled](#) (Forbes)

[Trump Attacks Stephen Colbert After Late Show Cancellation As He Claims ‘Jimmy Kimmel Is Next’](#) (Forbes)

Breaking News Alerts: Get the latest news straight to your inbox as it happens.

Email Address

Sign Up

By signing up, you agree to receive this newsletter, other updates about Forbes and its affiliates' offerings, our [Terms of Service](#) (including resolving disputes on an individual basis via arbitration), and you acknowledge our [Privacy Statement](#). Forbes is protected by reCAPTCHA, and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Got a tip? Share confidential information with Forbes.

This is your last free article.

Subscribe today to keep reading. For only \$1.50/week, unlock a world of unlimited insights and benefits to help you connect, grow and make an impact.

Subscribe Now