

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
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House of Representatives
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September 19, 2025

The Honorable Fara Damelin
Inspector General
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Room 5.102
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Inspector General Damelin:

On March 31, 2025, we wrote to Chairman Carr expressing our concern over his use of coercive sham investigations that violate First Amendment rights and personally benefit President Trump. We detailed his overt weaponization of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) investigatory, enforcement, and license transfer processes and requested documents and responses to questions.¹ At the same time, we shared a copy of that letter with you and recommended that your office investigate the Chairman's abuses of authority and misuse of FCC resources. We write to follow up on this request, and to provide even more examples of Chairman Carr's abuse of his authority—including his most egregious acts of censorship that occurred just this week. Based on these actions, we reiterate our recommendation that you exercise your authority and investigate Chairman Carr's management of the agency.

As an independent office within the FCC, the Office of Inspector General's mission is to investigate waste, fraud, abuse, and violations of the law. Chairman Carr's sham investigations and misuse of regulatory processes represent an unprecedented weaponization of the agency. They amount to gross mismanagement, waste, and misuse of FCC resources, sometimes in service of violations of the FCC's statutory prohibition on censorship and the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

When we wrote you in March, Chairman Carr had already launched or reopened numerous baseless investigations into: ABC/Disney; CBS/Paramount; NBC/Comcast; PBS, NPR, and at least 13 individual public radio stations; Audacy station KCBS-AM; and

¹ House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *E&C Democrats Launch Investigation into FCC Chairman Carr's Repeated Attacks on the First Amendment* (Mar. 31, 2025) (press release).

YouTubeTV.² Countless observers from across the political spectrum immediately recognized these actions for what they are—a pressure campaign designed to stifle journalism by targeting companies that express viewpoints antagonistic to President Trump.³ Indeed, Chairman Carr’s investigations have forgone traditional and long-followed FCC enforcement norms, such as withholding the identity of a target or nature of an investigation unless and until the FCC decides to take formal enforcement action, and treating as sacrosanct the First Amendment and the FCC’s statutory prohibition on engaging in censorship.⁴

Since our March letter, Chairman Carr has continued to misuse his and the FCC’s authority. He threatened Comcast with a “news distortion” investigation based on factual coverage of Kilmar Abrego Garcia’s erroneous deportation.⁵ Even though Chairman Carr serves as the head of an agency that is supposed to exercise independence from the Executive Branch, he echoed White House attacks on ABC/Disney due to coverage of President Trump on the ABC show, “The View.”⁶ And despite lacking authority over hiring decisions, Chairman Carr has

² Order (Jan. 22, 2025) *In the Matter of News Distortion Complaint Involving WPVI Television (Philadelphia), LLC, licensee of WPVI-TV, Philadelphia, PA*, Federal Communications Commission (GN Docket No. 25-11); Letter from Brendan Carr, Chairman, Federal Communication to Robert A. Iger, Chief Executive Officer, The Walt Disney Company (Mar. 27, 2025); Order (Jan. 22, 2025) *In the Matter of News Distortion Complaint Involving CBS Broadcasting Inc., licensee of WCBS, New York, NY*, Federal Communications Commission (GN Docket No. 25-11); Order (Jan. 22, 2025) *Equal Opportunities Complaint Involving NBC Telemundo License, LLC, licensee of WNBC, New York, NY*, Federal Communications Commission (GN Docket No. 25-11); Letter from Brendan Carr, Chairman, Federal Communication to Brian Roberts, CEO, Comcast Corporation (Feb. 11, 2025); Letter from Brendan Carr, Chairman, Federal Communication to Katherine Maher, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Public Radio, and Paula A. Kerger, President and Chief Executive Officer, PBS (Jan. 29, 2025); *Feds look into underwriting practices at WBUR and other public media outlets*, WBUR (Mar. 7, 2025); *FCC Investigates Radio Station Over Coverage of Immigration Raid*, Cato Institute (Feb. 11, 2025); Brendan Carr (@BrendanCarrFCC), X (Mar. 7, 2025, 2:07 PM) (<https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/189808819567528350>).

³ See, e.g., *How the FCC's 'Warrior for Free Speech' Became Our Censor in Chief*, Reason (Feb. 5, 2025); *Trump, CBS, and 'News Distortion'*, The Wall Street Journal (Feb. 9, 2025); *Expression over Radio Waves Is Not Exempt from the First Amendment*, The Federalist Society (Feb. 11, 2025); *Trump Versus Free Speech by Al Sikes*, The Talbot Spy (Feb. 5, 2025); *Not 'Deregulation' but Heavy-handed Regulation at the Trump FCC*, Brookings Institute (Feb. 25, 2025).

⁴ The FCC’s website states: “The existence of an investigation is generally nonpublic until the Commission takes enforcement action.” Federal Communications Commission, *Enforcement Primer* (<https://www.fcc.gov/general/enforcement-primer>) (accessed Sept. 18, 2025). In fact, it has been longstanding practice at Commission open meetings to vote on enforcement items before revealing the target and discussing the items publicly. See, e.g., December 2019 Open Meeting (Chairman Ajit Pai stating: “There is a long-standing practice at the agency we don’t publicly disclose the target of an investigation unless and until the Commission decides through a formal vote to take enforcement action.”). The FCC has also recognized the sensitivity of enforcement matters in agency directives to staff. Federal Communications Commission, *Management of Nonpublic Information* (Feb. 2015) (FCC INST 1139.1); Federal Communication Commission, *The FCC and Speech* (<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/fcc-and-speech>) (accessed Sept. 18, 2025).

⁵ *FCC chief targets Comcast-owned outlets over 'news distortion'*, The Hill (Apr. 17, 2025).

⁶ *'The View' Will Face 'Consequences' for Dissing Donald Trump, FCC Chair Claims After the White House Hints the Show Could Be Canceled*, OK! Magazine (July 25, 2025).

pressured multiple companies into changing their diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in order to earn merger approvals.⁷

Chairman Carr's misconduct and corruption was on full display when he exploited his power over the approval of a merger between Paramount and Skydance and his partisan handling of the complaint against "60 Minutes" for news distortion.⁸ He abused his authority by using both of these administrative actions to benefit President Trump's private litigation against Paramount. With billions of dollars on the line, Paramount apparently responded to pressure from the FCC to settle President Trump's lawsuit by forcing out the Head of CBS News Wendy McMahon and 60 Minutes' Executive Producer Bill Owens and cancelling "The Late Show"—the highest-rated show in the late-night time slot—just days after host Stephen Colbert spoke disparagingly about the company's handling of the lawsuit.⁹

Press reports indicated that members of the Paramount Board of Directors knew that settling the lawsuit in exchange for merger approval could meet a legal definition of a bribe.¹⁰ Yet, on July 2, Paramount announced that it would pay \$16 million toward President Trump's future library to settle the lawsuit.¹¹ On July 22, President Trump announced that he had

⁷ *T-Mobile announces DEI changes in pursuit of Lumos*, Light Reading (Apr. 1, 2025); *Verizon ends DEI policies to get FCC's blessing for its \$20 billion Frontier deal*, NPR (May 19, 2025); *T-Mobile ending DEI programs as it seeks US FCC approval for 2 deals*, Reuters (July 9, 2025); *Skydance pledges to Trump's FCC it'll eliminate DEI, install 'ombudsman' to root out 'bias' at CBS News*, CNN (July 23, 2025).

⁸ *Trump's FCC pick Brendan Carr says '60 Minutes' editing scandal could affect Paramount-Skydance merger review*, New York Post (Nov. 20, 2024).

⁹ *Wendy McMahon to step down as president and CEO of CBS News, Stations and CBS Media Ventures*, CBS News (May 19, 2025); *'60 Minutes' Chief Resigns in Emotional Meeting: 'The Company Is Done With Me'*, The New York Times (Apr. 22, 2025); *Lesley Stahl Says She's 'Devastated' by Upheaval at '60 Minutes'*, Variety (Apr. 22, 2025); *On air, '60 Minutes' reporter says 'none of us is happy' about changes that led top producer to quit*, NBC News (Apr. 28, 2025); *Skydance CEO met with FCC chair ahead of CBS canceling "The Late Show"*, Axios (July 18, 2025). Notably, Chairman Carr would not disclose whether or not he was personally responsible for the cancellation of "The Late Show." *FCC Chairman Refuses to Say If Trump Was Involved With 'Late Show' Cancellation Video*, TheWrap (July 24, 2025). Ellison also had multiple meetings with President Trump that resulted in complaints in the transaction docket of violations of the agency's rules governing ex parte communications. *Petition for Declaratory Ruling* (June 20, 2025) *In the Matter of Skydance Media and Paramount Global*, Federal Communications Commission (MB Docket No.24-275).

¹⁰ *Shari Redstone Wants a Resolution on Trump Lawsuit Ahead of Skydance Deal*, The New York Times (Feb. 28, 2025).

¹¹ *Paramount to Pay Trump \$16 Million to Settle '60 Minutes' Lawsuit*, The New York Times (July 2, 2025). President Trump has also announced that he has a side deal with Skydance's David Ellison for "\$20 Million Dollars more from the new Owners, in Advertising, PSAs, or similar Programming." *Trump Nods to Side Deal With Ellisons, Says '60 Minutes' Settlement Includes Additional \$16 Million in Advertising*, TheWrap (July 7, 2025); Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (July 22, 2025, 2:10 PM) (<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114898229237459086>).

received the payment.¹² And then, predictably, on July 24, Chairman Carr announced that the FCC had approved the transaction.¹³

Despite Chairman Carr's assertions that this merger review was completed in the "normal course," nothing about this process was normal.¹⁴ The review process stretched to 251 days – well in excess of the agency's informal 180-day shot clock – while the FCC awaited the settlement between Paramount and Trump. The transaction finally was approved two days after President Trump received his payout from the company.¹⁵ Despite successfully executing the shakedown, Chairman Carr has kept his regulatory hooks in the new, combined company by insisting on the installation of an ombudsperson tasked with evaluating "bias" within the company's news operations and keeping the news distortion complaint open.¹⁶

Others have recognized this as a corrupt deal and have taken action. The Freedom of the Press Foundation filed a lengthy and persuasive ethics complaint against Chairman Carr with the DC Bar for violating numerous Rules of Professional Conduct, including rules against "dishonesty, deceit, fraud, and misrepresentation" and "[c]onduct prejudicial to the administration of justice."¹⁷ Shareholders threatened to sue Paramount/Skydance, alleging the settlement will cause "catastrophic" harm to shareholder value.¹⁸ State Attorneys General have also been urged to investigate.¹⁹ And Commissioner Gomez, an agency employee, has been courageously blowing the whistle on the Chairman's mismanagement of the FCC and assault on the First Amendment in interviews, statements, and public forums across the country.²⁰

¹² *Trump says he received \$16 million payment after Paramount lawsuit settlement*, Reuters (July 22, 2025).

¹³ Federal Communications Commission, *FCC Approves Skydance's Acquisition of Paramount CBS* (July 24, 2025) (press release).

¹⁴ *Brendan Carr Defends Timing of Paramount Merger Approval: 'We Ran Normal Course' Video*, The Wrap (Aug. 3, 2025).

¹⁵ Federal Communications Commission, Skydance Media and Paramount Global, MB Docket No. 24-275 (<https://www.fcc.gov/transaction/skydance-paramount>) (accessed Sept. 18, 2025).

¹⁶ See note 13; Memorandum Opinion and Order (July 24, 2025) *In the Matter of Applications for Consent to the Transfer of Control of Paramount Global*, Federal Communications Commission (MB Docket No. 24-275).

¹⁷ Letter from Seth A. Stern, Esq., Director of Advocacy, Freedom of the Press Foundation to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, District of Columbia Court of Appeals (July 28, 2025).

¹⁸ *We plan to sue if Paramount settles with Trump over CBS lawsuit*, Freedom of the Press Foundation (May 23, 2025); *Prominent lawyers join press freedom fight to thwart Paramount settlement with Trump*, Los Angeles Times (June 6, 2025).

¹⁹ *Constitutional Lawyers Urge AGs to Probe Paramount-Skydance's Millions to Trump*, Common Dreams (July 31, 2025); Writers Guild of America West, *WGA Statement on Paramount's Decision to Cancel The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (July 18, 2025) (press release).

²⁰ *Anna Gomez's Lonely Fight*, Columbia Journalism Review (July 30, 2025); Federal Communications Commission, *Commissioner Gomez Launches 1st Amendment Tour to Challenge Government Censorship and Control* (Apr. 23, 2025) (press release).

Chairman Carr's most recent abuse of authority constituted his most transparent act of illegal and unconstitutional censorship to date. This week, he used his position as FCC Chairman to launch an illegal campaign to remove Jimmy Kimmel from the nation's airwaves. This move was months, if not, years in the making. During his first term, President Trump had members of his administration contact Disney, ABC's parent company, in an effort to stop Kimmel's jokes.²¹ In recent months, President Trump's explicit calls to have Jimmy Kimmel's show cancelled have escalated.²² Seemingly on cue, Chairman Carr's harassment of Disney/ABC also escalated.²³ In his monologue on Monday, September 15, Jimmy Kimmel made an observation about reactions to Charlie Kirk's murder on the right and then went on to play a clip of President Trump inexplicably responding to a press question about the murder by talking about construction of the new White House ballroom.²⁴ While the monologue received little attention at the time, on September 17, Chairman Carr appeared on right-wing commentator Benny Johnson's podcast. During the episode, Chairman Carr: 1) issued an explicit threat to Disney/ABC, and other licensees, of FCC action if the company did not punish Jimmy Kimmel for his speech; and 2) called on local ABC affiliates to refuse to air Jimmy Kimmel's show.²⁵

Specifically, to Disney/ABC, and all licensees that air ABC content, Chairman Carr said, "[W]e can do this the easy way or the hard way. 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."²⁶ To the local affiliates he said, "Frankly I think it's past time that a lot of these licensed broadcasters themselves push back on Comcast and Disney, and say 'We are going to preempt — we are not going to run Kimmel anymore until you straighten this out.'... It's time for them to step up and say this garbage — to the extent that that's what comes down the pipe in the future — isn't something that serves the needs of our local communities."²⁷ Shortly after Carr's call to action for local affiliates, Nexstar, one of the largest ABC affiliate owners in the country put out a statement echoing Carr's call, saying they would no longer carry Jimmy Kimmel's show from ABC's broadcast stream.²⁸ Later in the evening, Sinclair, another large ABC affiliate station

²¹ *Trump White House Pressured to Censor...Jimmy Kimmel*, Rolling Stone (Feb. 26, 2025).

²² Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (July 22, 2025, 9:16 AM) (<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114874422468516376>).

²³ *FCC Chairman Talks About 'The View' Facing "Consequences" After Trump White House Lashed Out At Joy Behar*, Deadline Hollywood (July 24, 2025).

²⁴ *Here's what Jimmy Kimmel said about Charlie Kirk: The full moment explained*, New York Post (Sept. 18, 2025).

²⁵ YouTube, *Jimmy Kimmel LIES About Charlie Kirk Killer, Blames Charlie For His Murder!? Disney Must Fire Kimmel* (Sept. 17, 2025) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTyX9JC-rhA>).

²⁶ *FCC chair levels threat against ABC, Disney after Kimmel suggested Charlie Kirk assassin was 'MAGA'*, Fox News (Sept. 17, 2025).

²⁷ *FCC Chairman Threatens ABC Over Jimmy Kimmel's Remarks About Charlie Kirk's Killer*, Variety (Sept. 17, 2025).

²⁸ Nexstar Media Group, *Nexstar ABC Affiliates To Preempt "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" Indefinitely Beginning Tonight* (Sept. 17, 2025) (press release).

owner, did the same.²⁹ Carr's threat to Disney/ABC reportedly set off emergency meetings within the company.³⁰ As a result of these decisions by Nexstar and Sinclair, Disney suspended Jimmy Kimmel's show indefinitely.³¹ Notably, this intense pressure campaign initiated by Carr and elevated by the local affiliate station owners comes at a time during which both Nexstar and Sinclair are seeking regulatory action from the FCC, including both current and prospective merger approvals and media ownership rule relaxation.³²

And, perhaps as a fitting coda to this shameful episode, President Trump and Chairman Carr celebrated Kimmel's silencing on social media and, apparently, in text messages that Chairman Carr sent to press figures.³³ President Trump is now calling for other late-night hosts, mainly Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers at NBC, to be fired.³⁴ Nothing in Chairman Carr's conduct over his tenure as chairman suggests that he will not work dutifully to make this happen.

The timeline speaks for itself—Chairman Carr publicly threatened the licenses of several broadcasters and directly recommended both the curtailing of protected speech and punishment for protected speech. This is censorship. And such censorship is prohibited both by the Communications Act and the Constitution. Chairman Carr's use of his office and any official resources in furtherance of an illegal and unconstitutional campaign of censorship constitutes a clear abuse of authority and demonstrates a lack of appropriate policies and procedures at the agency that would prevent such blatant violations.

Chairman Carr's unprecedented and abusive actions warrant immediate and thorough investigation by your office. There is ongoing and unprecedented abuse of FCC authority weaponizing the agency in a way that violates regulated entities' Constitutional rights and personally benefits the President. Sham investigations and regulatory processes are also being used to operationalize this abuse of authority that amounts to gross mismanagement, waste, and misuse of FCC resources. As you know, in investigating these matters your office is entitled to full access to all Commission records and should the Chairman fail to cooperate with an IG

²⁹ Sinclair Broadcast Group, *Sinclair Says Kimmel Suspension is Not Enough, Calls on FCC and ABC to Take Additional Action* (Sept. 17, 2025) (press release).

³⁰ *Cancelling Kimmel*, Status (Sept. 17, 2025).

³¹ *Kimmel On Pause: Why Did Disney Preempt Him, Who Made The Call & Will He Come Back?*, Deadline Hollywood (Sept. 17, 2025).

³² *Nexstar And Sinclair, Two Largest Station Groups, Wield Influence In ABC Decision To Pull Jimmy Kimmel In Light Of His Charlie Kirk Comments — Update*, Deadline Hollywood (Sept. 17, 2025).

³³ See note 31; Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (July 22, 2025, 8:04 PM) (<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/115222372625104790>); Brendan Carr (@BrendanCarrFCC), X (Sept. 17, 2025, 7:00 PM) (<https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/1968449919221416427>); Brendan Carr (@BrendanCarrFCC), X (Sept. 17, 2025 11:30 PM) (<https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/1968517933073617248>); Brian Stelter (@brianstelter), X (Sept. 17, 2025 6:59 PM) (<https://x.com/brianstelter/status/1968449834697834591>).

³⁴ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (July 22, 2025, 8:04 PM) (<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/115222372625104790>).

investigation, you can issue a “Seven-Day Letter” to officially bring it to the Committee’s attention.³⁵

We specifically request that you investigate Chairman Carr’s actions and the adequacy of policies and procedures at the FCC including, but not limited to, the following:

1. What communications took place, what actions were taken, and what resources were used by Chairman Carr, FCC officials, FCC staff, or individuals acting on their behalf (collectively “Chairman Carr and FCC personnel”) that involved or referred to President Trump’s private litigation against CBS—a topic entirely outside the jurisdiction of the FCC?
2. What directions, if any, were given to Chairman Carr and FCC personnel by any White House official or individual acting on behalf of the White House regarding the consideration of President Trump’s private litigation against CBS during the merger review of Paramount and Skydance?
3. Were adequate policies and procedures in place at the FCC during the pendency of the Paramount-Skydance merger review to prevent consideration of factors outside the statutory authority of the FCC, such as litigation by a government official in their personal capacity against an entity involved in the potential merger?
 - a. To the extent such policies and procedures were in place during the merger review and were facially adequate, were those policies and procedures followed by Chairman Carr and FCC personnel?
 - b. To the extent such policies and procedures were not in place during the merger review, why not?
4. Given FCC’s status as an independent agency, were adequate policies and procedures in place at the FCC during the pendency of the Paramount-Skydance merger review to prevent improper influence on FCC’s decision making from the White House, other executive branch agencies, or individuals acting on behalf on the White House?
 - a. To the extent such policies and procedures were in place during the merger review and were facially adequate, were those policies and procedures followed by Chairman Carr and FCC personnel?
 - b. To the extent such policies and procedures were not in place during the merger review, why not?

³⁵ Inspector General Act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-452.

5. What communications took place, what actions were taken, and what resources were used by Chairman Carr and FCC personnel that involved or referred to statements made by Jimmy Kimmel or the reaction by entities to statements by Jimmy Kimmel?
 - a. To what extent were taxpayer dollars used in coordinating, preparing for, facilitating, promoting, or otherwise communicating about Chairman Carr's appearance on Benny Johnson's podcast on September 17?
 - b. To what extent were taxpayer dollars used in drafting, posting, or promoting Chairman Carr's statements on X regarding Nexstar's decision to preempt Jimmy Kimmel's show?
 - c. To what extent, if at all, was the FCC's statutory prohibition on censorship or potential infringement of the First Amendment discussed or evaluated by Chairman Carr and FCC personnel regarding statements planned or actually made by Chairman Carr on the Benny Johnson podcast or X?
6. Are adequate policies and procedures in place at the FCC to ensure that communications and actions by the Chairman, Commissioners, and staff comply with the statutory prohibition on censorship by the FCC and the First Amendment?

We appreciate your attention to this matter, which will inform further congressional action. If you have any questions about this request, please contact the Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Doris Matsui
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications
and Technology



Yvette Clarke
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

The Honorable Fara Damelin

September 19, 2025

Page 9

cc: The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman

The Honorable Richard Hudson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

The Honorable John Joyce
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations