

CBS Mornings

09/19/25

7:00:18 a.m. [TEASE]

7 seconds

GAYLE KING: Ahead, there's new backlash over the suspension of Jimmy Kimmel. His colleagues in late night TV, they're coming to his defense. We'll show you what they're saying.

(....)

7:00:31 a.m. [TEASE]

14 seconds

KING: Late night hosts defend Jimmy Kimmel after his suspension as President Trump issues new threats to TV broadcasters.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Late Night Hosts Back Kimmel]

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: They give you only bad publicity. They're getting a license, I would think maybe their license should be taken away.

(....)

7:01:21 a.m.

7 minutes and 48 seconds

JIMMY FALLON [on NBC's *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, 09/18/25]: I woke up to a hundred text messages from my dad saying, I'm sorry they canceled your show. Hey, that's not me.

SETH MEYERS [on NBC's *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, 09/19/25]: Completely unrelated. I just want to say before we get started here, that I've always admired and respected, Mr. Trump.

JON STEWART [on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, 09/18/25]: We have another fun, hilarious administration compliant show.

STEPHEN COLBERT [on CBS's *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, 09/18/25]: And to Jimmy. Just let me say, I stand with you and your staff 100 percent, and also you couldn't let me enjoy this for like one week. Just come on.

ANNOUNCER: This morning's Eye Opener is presented by Progressive. Making it easy to bundle insurance.

KING: Late night hosts standing firm with Jimmy Kimmel. It was really nice to see.

NATE BURLESON: Because they are peers and also close friends.

TONY DOKOUPIL: Yes, no surprise there.

KING: They understand, and that's, of course, where we're going to begin. The Trump administration, raising the stakes in the showdown with the broadcasters after ABC took Jimmy Kimmel's late night show off the air. Now Jimmy Kimmel is on indefinite suspension following strong reaction to his comments about the murder of conservative activist, Charlie Kirk. Hollywood writers protested outside his studio yesterday, calling his suspension an attack on free speech. Jonathan Vigliotti has more on how the other late night hosts are responding. There was a lot of solidarity on late night TV last night, Jonathan. Good morning to you.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Growing Backlash Over Kimmel Suspension]

JONATHAN VIGLIOTTI: There was. And Gayle, good morning to you. Many in the entertainment industry are showing their support for Jimmy Kimmel. Reaction pouring in from late night icons, including Jon Stewart, who normally hosts his show on Monday nights.

STEWART [on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, 09/18/25]: We have another fun, hilarious administration compliant show.

VIGLIOTTI: *Daily Show* host Jon Stewart returned to host his show on his day off to deliver sarcastic praise of President Trump.

STEWART [on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, 09/18/25]: Some naysayers may argue that this administration's speech concerns are merely a cynical ploy. Some people would say that, not me, though I think it's great.

VIGLIOTTI: As he and other late night comedians addressed ABC's suspension of *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* on their own airwaves.

COLBERT [on CBS's *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, 09/18/25]: Tonight, we are all Jimmy Kimmel. I still have a show, though, right?

FALLON [on NBC's *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, 09/18/25]: A lot of people are worried that we won't keep saying what we want to say, or that we will be censored, but I'm going to cover the President's trip to the U.K., just like I normally would, and he looked incredibly handsome.

MEYERS [on NBC's *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, 09/19/25]: I've always admired and respected Mr. Trump, and if you've ever seen me say anything negative about him, that's just A.I.

VIGLIOTTI: Late night legend David Letterman offered this rebuke.

DAVID LETTERMAN: You can't go around firing somebody because you're fearful or trying to suck up to an authoritarian

VIGLIOTTI: Kimmel's show was taken off the air Wednesday over his comments after the arrest of the man accused of assassinating conservative activist, Charlie Kirk.

JIMMY KIMMEL [on ABC's *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, 09/15/25]: We hit some new lows over the weekend with the MAGA gang desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk is anything other than one of them and doing everything they can to score political points from it.

VIGLIOTTI: Thursday, multiple media outlets reported Kimmel planned to respond to the controversy on his show, Wednesday. Reports say he spoke to Disney executives about his prepared monologue for Wednesday's show, but they worried it would inflame the situation. The decision to pull the show further fueled by concerns over threats to Kimmel and his staff, but by then, Nexstar the country's largest local broadcasting group, had already announced it would preempt *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* after FCC Chairman Brendan Carr, a Trump appointee, appeared to threaten broadcasters who failed to "take action against Kimmel." Nexstar is currently seeking FCC approval for a \$6.2 billion merger with another media company, TEGNA. On Thursday, Carr insisted his agency was empowering local stations to respond to the needs of their viewers.

FCC CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR [on CNBC's *Squawk on the Street*, 09/19/25]: We are in the midst of a massive shift in dynamics in the media ecosystem for lots of reasons, again, including the permission structure that President Trump's election has provided, and I would simply say we're not done yet.

VIGLIOTTI: The President was more explicit about the potential consequences for broadcasters.

TRUMP: They give me only bad publicity, the press, I mean, they're getting a license, I would think maybe their license should be taken away.

VIGLIOTTI: And Nexstar, in a statement, said it had no communication with the FCC or any other government agency before making the decision to pull *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* Sinclair, another broadcaster wants an apology from Kimmel, and also a donation made to Charlie Kirk's foundation. As for when the show will go back on, if ever. That is still unclear, though, Tony, there are media reports indicating that Disney is hopeful for its return.

DOKOUPIL: We'll see, Jonathan. For more on all this and where the law stands on it, we're joined by our legal contributor, Jessica Levinson. Jessica, good morning to you. So, folks on the right are saying, look, there's no First Amendment right for Jimmy Kimmel to talk and make millions of dollars on late night television. And then other people are saying, but look, the FCC can't threaten free expression by revoking a license, or can they? What's the law actually say on all this?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Reaction to Trump's Threats to Broadcasters]

JESSICA LEVINSON: Or maybe both people are right. So when we think about the First Amendment, who does it protect us against? It protects us against the government. So, can a private employer like ABC decide to take action against Jimmy Kimmel because they don't like the content of what he said? They can. That's not a First Amendment question, that's more of an employment contracts based question, but then you introduce the FCC, and there's kind of two questions, as far as I see it, with respect to the FCC. The first question is whether or not their actions gave rise to legal coercion. When they said to ABC, I'm paraphrasing here, basically, we can do this the hard way or the easy way. Does that then basically introduce the government into ABC's decisions, so that ABC is not acting voluntarily, and instead it is the government pushing and saying, you need to oust Jimmy Kimmel and then the separate issue for the FCC really is that licensing issue, and how and whether they could revoke a license. I'll just say revoking a license is a nuclear option, and you cannot do it based on I don't like what you said.

DOKOUPIL: So Jessica, let's talk about recourse, because back in the early 70s, in the Nixon era, Watergate, The White House threatened to pull licenses from *Washington Post* owned TV stations in Florida, those stations prevailed. So if a battle ensued here, what recourse to the stations have to fight and win?

LEVINSON: So they absolutely do have recourse. You just said, you know, they fought and they won. So what would happen first? First, there would be a fairly lengthy process within the FCC. I just want people to know it's not like somebody says, you know what? I think their license should be pulled, and the next day, that's what happens. There's first a complaint that's filed, then there's an investigation, then there's a hearing before an administrative law judge. You can — you're entitled to due process. ABC is entitled to notice and an opportunity to be heard and to challenge what's being alleged before that administrative law judge, then you have the FCC voting. Then if the FCC does vote to say, okay, now we are taking this big step. We're revoking your license, you can then challenge it in court. It would go to the D.C. Circuit.

DOKOUPIL: All right or what happens is what we just saw. Jessica Levinson, thank you very much.