

FCC Chairman Clarifies Action Against ABC in Wake of Kimmel Controversy

Disney-owned ABC TV stations are facing an early license renewal as part of the Federal Communications Commission's investigation into Disney's DEI practices, FCC Chairman Brendan Carr said Thursday.

Last week, ABC's Jimmy Kimmel snarked that First Lady Melania Trump had the look of an "expectant widow" – a comment that came days before an attempted assassination of President Donald Trump.

The president and first lady have since called for ABC to fire Kimmel.

On Tuesday, the FCC announced that it was ordering eight ABC stations owned by Disney, ABC's parent company, to undergo a license renewal, even though the stations' license had not been due to expire until 2028.

Although initial media reports connected the two issues, Carr said that's not accurate.

"There was no pressure from the outside. There was no suggestion from the outside," Carr said, according to NBC News.



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"There was no call for agency action from the outside. This was based on our assessment of where we were," he added.

"In this particular case, this action is driven by investigation into DEI conduct, not any speech at all."

Carr said Disney delayed providing DEI-related documents to the FCC, according to Fox News.

"It felt to us like they were playing rope-a-dope and weren't being entirely forthcoming with the production. They're going to disagree with that, I'm sure. They get the right to," Carr said.

"If they produced the documents on the original deadline, I don't think we'd be in the same temporal moment as we are right now," Carr added. "We don't think they were entirely forthcoming."

Carr said the FCC must not "mess around" due to the importance of battling discrimination.

"Maybe they'll take it more seriously at this point," Carr said.

"Our DEI review is going to continue and is going to be part of that. We are calling their licenses in for early renewal; I think they have eight station licenses. Once they make that filing, then anyone can file petitions to deny," Carr said.

"Disney, as part of the filing, is going to have to come in and demonstrate that they've been operating in the public interest," Carr remarked. "They're going to have to demonstrate that they've met their burden."

Disney issued a statement in response to the FCC action.

"We have received the Federal Communications Commission's order initiating an accelerated review of the licenses held by ABC's owned television stations," a Disney representative said.

"ABC and its stations have a long record of operating in full compliance with FCC rules and serving their local communities with trusted news, emergency information and public-interest programming," the representative continued.

"We are confident that record demonstrates our continued qualifications as licensees under the Communications Act and the First Amendment and are prepared to show that through the appropriate legal channels. Our focus remains, as always, on serving viewers in the local communities where our stations operate."

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