

# Paramount/CBS caves in to Trump, to pay \$16 million in “60 Minutes” lawsuit

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In the latest capitulation by the corporate media to the Trump White House, Paramount Global, the corporate owner of CBS, has agreed to pay \$16 million to settle a bogus lawsuit by Trump which sought \$20 billion in damages.

Trump filed the suit last year, claiming that the CBS program “60 Minutes” had deceptively edited an interview with his Democratic opponent in 2024, Vice President Kamala Harris, to make her look more coherent and well-spoken. There was no evidence to back this claim, and the eventual release of transcripts and out-takes of the interview showed only routine editing, for a 20-minute segment on “60 Minutes” and a much briefer segment on the network’s Sunday morning interview program, “Face the Nation.”

Trump initially sought \$10 billion in damages, a figure out of all proportion to any impact on his campaign, even if all his claims had been true. He then arbitrarily doubled that figure to \$20 billion, before eventually settling for less than one one-thousandth of that amount. The \$16 million will not be paid directly to Trump, but to his lawyers—meaning that CBS paid for the privilege of being sued by the president—and to Trump’s future presidential library.

While CBS did not make an apology to Trump and denied any political bias in its editing, it did agree to release raw transcripts of interviews in the future. The settlement serves to reinforce Trump’s campaign to whip the corporate media into line with the priorities of his fascist administration. A spokesman for his legal team called the agreement “another win for the American people as he, once again, holds the Fake News media accountable for their wrongdoing and deceit.”

The deal has come under intense fire from past and present reporters for “60 Minutes,” while the program’s long-time head producer Bill Owens resigned in April, saying that he was under so much pressure from top

executives to tone down criticism of Trump that he felt he was losing “editorial independence.”

CBS News President Wendy McMahon resigned in May, reportedly rejecting a proposal that CBS issue an apology to Trump, as he was then demanding. She issued a farewell statement to CBS employees saying, “It’s become clear that the company and I do not agree on the path forward.”

Longstanding “60 Minutes” correspondents Lesley Stahl and Scott Pelley commented after the resignation of producer Bill Owens that the decision to settle with Trump was deeply opposed by the entire staff. Stahl called the departure of Owens “a punch in the stomach,” indicating that employees had been discussing an exit “en masse” in protest.

Pelley closed out one broadcast of “60 Minutes” with an open declaration of opposition, bemoaning the resignation of Owens and explaining it as follows:

our parent company, Paramount, is trying to complete a merger. The Trump administration must approve it. Paramount began to supervise our content in new ways. None of our stories has been blocked, but Bill felt he lost the independence that honest journalism requires.

You really wish the company was behind you 100%, right? You really wish the top echelons of the company would come out publicly and say, “60 Minutes, for example, is a crown jewel of American journalism, and we stand by it 100%.” I haven’t heard that.

While Pelley did not say there had been any direct interference so far with “60 Minutes” programming, he warned in a commencement speech at Wake Forest

University that under Trump, the United States was moving in a “similar direction” as the McCarthy era, in which “People are silencing themselves for fear the government will retaliate against them, and that’s not the America we love.” He continued:

our sacred rule of law is under attack. Journalism is under attack. Universities are under attack. Freedom of speech is under attack. An insidious fear is reaching through our schools, our businesses, our homes and into our private thoughts. The fear to speak. In America?

For the billionaire who controls Paramount, Shari Redstone, daughter and heir of Sumner Redstone, considerations of journalism and democracy could not hold a candle to the huge financial interests involved in her proposed sale of Paramount to Skydance Media, which is currently being reviewed by the Federal Communications Commission, under the control of Chairman Brendan Carr, a Trump loyalist installed earlier this year.

Skydance Media is controlled by David Ellison, son of mega-billionaire Larry Ellison, the founder of Oracle Corp. and an adamant Trump supporter. Redstone stands to realize \$2 billion from the \$8 billion takeover. In return, CBS will pass under the editorial control of an oligarch whose political views are indistinguishable from those of Rupert Murdoch, the billionaire owner of Fox.

The only hold-up on the deal after McMahon stepped down was concern over whether paying off Trump so that his hand-picked FCC would approve the merger could be prosecuted as bribery, not by the Trump administration, of course, but by a successor.

The settlement came on the eve of two deadlines, with a Paramount stockholders’ meeting set for Wednesday night, July 2, and the Paramount-Skydance deal set to be finalized on Sunday, July 7. Denying the obvious connection, Paramount issued a statement that the settlement of the Trump lawsuit was “completely separate from, and unrelated to, the Skydance transaction and the FCC approval process.”

In this case, as in many others, if you have to issue a denial, it is because everyone knows it is true. The denial is merely a form of confirmation of financial interests driving this capitulation to the Trump administration, which are common knowledge.

As recently as a court filing on June 23, CBS called the Trump suit “meritless” and accused the president of attempting to “evade bedrock First Amendment principles” guaranteeing free speech and freedom of the press.

Paramount’s corporate considerations dictated the structure of the deal, which was along the same lines as that made by ABC News late last year, when it agreed to similar financial terms—\$15 million for the Trump “library” and \$1 million for his lawyers—in order to settle a lawsuit filed by Trump against a slightly inaccurate statement made by news anchor George Stephanopoulos more than a year ago.

Stephanopoulos said that a New York City jury had found Trump liable for rape in the civil lawsuit filed by writer L. Jean Carroll over an assault dating back to 1987. The actual finding was that Trump was guilty of sexual abuse, because the assault did not include penetration. The jury found Carroll entirely credible and awarded her substantial damages.

Two other social media giants have also made payoffs to Trump on the basis of similar lawsuits, with Meta paying \$25 million to settle a suit stemming from its decision to suspend his Facebook accounts after the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol. X, now owned by billionaire Trump backer Elon Musk, paid \$10 million to settle a suit over a similar cutoff.

Trump is also suing the *Des Moines Register* and its longtime pollster, Ann Selzer, over a pre-election poll showing Harris leading Trump in that state. The *Register* is fighting the lawsuit, but has severed its ties with Selzer.

Another target for the White House is CNN, although Trump has indicated he would like to have the cable network prosecuted rather than file a civil suit against it. Trump, White House immigration “czar” Tom Homan and Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem have all suggested that the Justice Department “needs to look at” CNN because it reported on ICEBlock, an online app that allows users to monitor ICE raids and take precautions against them. Noem claimed such monitoring was “illegal.”



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