

Billionaire Trump backers smash up CBS “60 Minutes”

Patrick Martin
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CBS News fired “60 Minutes” correspondent Scott Pelley Tuesday after a contentious staff meeting at which Pelley challenged the newly appointed executive producer Nick Bilton and CBS News editor-in-chief Bari Weiss over their destruction of the long-running news magazine, the most widely viewed network news program.

At the meeting Monday, Pelley accused Weiss of “murdering” the show through firing so many of its experienced producers and on-air correspondents and intervening to block the broadcast of segments critical of the policies of the Trump administration. He also voiced concerns about Bilton’s lack of any experience or qualifications to oversee the program.

Pelley has worked for CBS News for 37 years, the last 22 with “60 Minutes,” and has won numerous journalism awards, and more than 50 Emmys. In a bitter letter made public after his firing, he wrote, in part:

Last month, 60 Minutes lost its DNA when our entire senior leadership and two of our best on-air correspondents were cruelly fired without cause. Good people were silenced because they stood up for our audience. They stood for fairness against the forces of political bias; they stood for professionalism against chaos.

For my part, new management has instructed me to inject falsehoods and bias into a politically sensitive story. I’ve been told to include assertions that are unverified. To date, in every case, I have managed to ignore these instructions or refuse them. Recently, politicians have been invited to choose correspondents for interviews on the broadcast. Giving politicians

control over 60 Minutes interviews is not how this is done.

At 60 Minutes, we have fought harder than anyone knows to save the program that became an American icon. We owed that to our millions of viewers. I am deeply moved by the thousands of wishes we have received to “keep up the good fight.” Most of the men and women of CBS News are still in that fight. But now the collapse of values at the top has become untenable. The leadership of 60 Minutes is no longer recognizable. The principles I hold dear are gone, and so I must leave as well.

Pelley did not spell out what lies and bias his new CBS bosses wanted him to “inject” into a story, but there is no doubt about the overall direction of the network, which is, as he put it, to “curry favor with the Trump administration.”

Weiss’s first overtly political action was to pull the planned December 21, 2025 broadcast of a report by correspondent Sharyn Alfonsi about the abuse of prisoners at the CECOT prison in El Salvador, where the Trump administration sent hundreds of deported migrants from Venezuela. The program was eventually broadcast on January 18, 2026 when it was scheduled against an NFL playoff contest between the Los Angeles Rams and the Chicago Bears. This maneuver cut the audience to only 5 million, compared to the season average of 9.1 million viewers.

On Thursday, May 28, Weiss fired Alfonsi, as well as correspondent Cecilia Vega and executive producer Tanya Simon, replacing Simon with Bilton, a former tech reporter for the *New York Times* whose only video experience came in directing several documentaries.

Executive editor Draggan Mihailovich has also been fired, along with three other senior producers.

Long-time correspondent Anderson Cooper left “60 Minutes” at the end of the season, evidently in disagreement with the overall shift in CBS since it was taken over last fall by Paramount.

The news magazine is preparing for a new season with only three returning correspondents—84-year-old Lesly Stahl, Ed Whitaker, who is 74, and Jon Wertheim—assuming that they do not follow their colleagues out the door.

Weiss was chosen by David Ellison, the new corporate owner of CBS, to conduct a complete makeover of CBS News along right-wing lines. Weiss made a noisy exit from the *New York Times* editorial board in July 2020, attacking the newspaper from the right, particularly over its very modest criticisms of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

She founded a Substack newsletter which eventually became *The Free Press*, an online media venture backed by pro-Zionist billionaires, including Howard Schultz of Starbucks, David Sacks (now a top Trump adviser) and internet venture capitalist Marc Andreessen. When Ellison tabbed Weiss to run CBS News, he bought *The Free Press* for \$150 million.

David Ellison is the son of centibillionaire Oracle founder Larry Ellison, the fourth or fifth-richest man in the United States and a fervent supporter of Donald Trump and his fascist agenda. The senior Ellison provided the financial muscle for Paramount’s takeover of Skydance Media, the corporate owner of CBS, in August 2025, and then for Paramount to outbid Netflix in order to acquire Warner Brothers/Discovery.

That deal was completed in February 2026, bringing CNN and CBS under the same corporate umbrella, with ominous implications both for jobs at the two networks and for a pronounced shift in their editorial postures. David Ellison had reportedly White House discussions with Trump on the removal of several CNN anchors whom the president regards as hostile to him.

Pelley’s firing comes less than two weeks after the final episode of *The Late Show*, which CBS canceled last year. The show’s host Stephen Colbert was a frequent and occasionally caustic critic of Trump, but CBS leaders claimed the show was losing \$40 million a year, despite being the top-rated late-night program.

The purging of CBS—likely to be followed by a similar pogrom at CNN—is an essential part of the construction of an authoritarian regime in the United States, which is demanded by the billionaires in order to protect their wealth from the mounting social opposition from below.

Virtually the entire US corporate media has been placed under the direct control of a handful of monopolies run largely by billionaires. Besides Paramount, which now controls Warner Brothers, CNN and CBS, there is the Murdoch empire, including Fox News, the *Wall Street Journal* and other publications, and the *Washington Post*, now suffering a similar right-wing makeover under owner Jeff Bezos of Amazon. Walt Disney Corp. owns ABC, while Comcast owns NBC.



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