

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

July 29, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Ms. Shari Redstone
Non-Executive Chair
Paramount Global
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

Dear Ms. Redstone:

On July 1, 2025, Paramount Global (“Paramount”) announced that it would settle a frivolous lawsuit brought by President Donald Trump against CBS News by paying the President \$16 million.¹ This lawsuit is just one piece of President Trump and his Administration’s unprecedented and illegal campaign to chill free speech and independent news reporting protected by the First Amendment. Paramount’s settlement reeks of a thinly disguised bribe to expedite and favorably influence the Trump Administration’s assessment of Paramount’s \$8 billion merger with Skydance Media, LLC (“Skydance”). Moreover, CBS’s decision to cancel *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* appears to be another in a series of transparent attempts to sweeten the deal for President Trump.² Although Paramount’s effort to win regulatory approval of its merger appears to have paid off,³ your company’s capitulation to President Trump will accelerate his and the Administration’s assault on bedrock free speech principles that underpin our democracy. Accordingly, I write to demand that you provide the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (“the Subcommittee”) with detailed information about Paramount’s settlement and that you preserve any and all related records.

¹ Benjamin Mullin, Michael M. Grynbaum, Lauren Hirsch & David Enrich, *Paramount to Pay Trump \$16 Million to Settle ‘60 Minutes’ Lawsuit*, N.Y. TIMES (Jul. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/02/business/media/paramount-trump-60-minutes-lawsuit.html>; Amended Complaint, *Trump v. CBS Broadcasting Inc.*, No. 24-cv-00236 (N.D. Tex. Feb. 7, 2025), ECF No. 36, https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451.36.0_3.pdf.

² Yurii Stasiuk & Nicole Markus, *CBS cancels Stephen Colbert’s show days after Trump settlement criticism*, POLITICO (Jul. 18, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/18/cbs-cancels-stephen-colbert-00462089>; Brian Stelter, *Inside CBS’ ‘agonizing decision’ to cancel Colbert’s top-rated late-night show*, CNN (Jul. 18, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/18/media/colbert-cbs-late-show-cancel-paramount-trump> (“Trump personally celebrated the cancellation on Friday morning, writing on Truth Social that ‘I absolutely love that Colbert got fired. His talent was even less than his ratings. I hear Jimmy Kimmel is next. Has even less talent than Colbert!’”).

³ On July 24, 2025, the Federal Communications Commission announced that it has approved Paramount’s merger with Skydance. Wyatt Grantham-Philips & Michael Liedtke, *The FCC approves Paramount’s \$8B deal with Skydance after months of chaos and political intrigue*, AP (Jul. 24, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/paramount-skydance-merger-fcc-approval-74836c0da9dc0b33f580f714a3f2bfbb>.

President Trump's lawsuit against CBS News is a baseless attack on the free press, meant to intimidate a storied American news broadcaster.⁴ On October 31, 2024, President Trump sued CBS News in a Texas federal court, claiming that CBS News' airing of segments of a *60 Minutes* interview with then-Vice President Kamala Harris intentionally deceived voters to provide the Vice President an electoral advantage.⁵ After assuming office, President Trump doubled the amount he demanded from CBS News, seeking \$20 billion.⁶ Simultaneously, in an egregious abuse of regulatory authority, the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") announced that it is investigating CBS News' editing of the *60 Minutes* interview for alleged news distortion.⁷ *60 Minutes* and its journalists have forcefully maintained that the allegations of deceptive editing are without merit,⁸ and the President's case has been "labeled as frivolous by 1st Amendment experts."⁹ Indeed, Paramount itself initially attacked President Trump's claims, in part, by emphasizing that the President's lawsuit was "an affront to the First Amendment" and "without basis in law or fact."¹⁰

Despite the President's plainly meritless lawsuit, Paramount chose to pay President Trump a \$16 million settlement and released transcripts of Vice President Harris's *60 Minutes* interviews to the FCC.¹¹ Additionally, President Trump claims that "CBS will provide him with \$20m worth of advertising and programming" following Paramount's merger with Skydance.¹² This decision to settle—which runs directly counter to Paramount's earlier assertions in court

⁴ "From Walter Cronkite's reporting on the Vietnam War to publishing the first photos of the abuses by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib, CBS News has a proud history of public service when it comes to checking government wrongdoing." Katie Fallow, *Paramount's Trump Lawsuit Settlement: Curtain Call for the First Amendment?* (Guest Column), VARIETY (Jul. 3, 2025), <https://variety.com/2025/biz/opinion/paramount-trump-lawsuit-settlement-first-amendment-column-1236446790/>.

⁵ See Complaint, Trump v. CBS Broadcasting Inc., No. 24-cv-00236 (N.D. Tex. Oct. 31, 2024), ECF No. 1, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451.1.0.pdf>.

⁶ Amended Complaint, Trump v. CBS Broadcasting Inc., No. 24-cv-00236 (N.D. Tex. Feb. 7, 2025), ECF No. 36, https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451.36.0_3.pdf.

⁷ RCFP: FCC must drop CBS 'news distortion' inquiry, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (Mar. 7, 2025), <https://www.rcfp.org/fcc-comments-cbs-news-distortion/>.

⁸ A statement from 60 Minutes, CBS News (Oct. 20, 2024), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-statement/>. Moreover, "Mr. Trump pulled out of his interview with 60 Minutes and the vice president participated." *Id.*

⁹ Stephen Battaglio, *Inside CBS News: Fear, anger and a silver lining after Paramount-Trump settlement*, L.A. TIMES (July 3, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2025-07-03/cbs-news-tries-to-move-forward-after-trump-lawsuit-settlement>.

¹⁰ Defendants' Memorandum of Law in Support of Their Motion to Dismiss Plaintiffs' Amended Complaint for Lack of Subject-Matter Jurisdiction and Failure to State a Claim at 1, Trump v. Paramount Global et al., No. 24-cv-00236 (N.T. Tex. Mar. 6, 2025), ECF No. 52, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451/gov.uscourts.txnd.396451.52.0.pdf>.

¹¹ Benjamin Mullin, Michael M. Grynbaum, Lauren Hirsch, & David Enrich, *Paramount to Pay Trump \$16 Million to Settle '60 Minutes' Lawsuit*, N.Y. TIMES (July 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/02/business/media/paramount-trump-60-minutes-lawsuit.html>; David Shepardson, *CBS turns over documents in FCC probe of then VP Harris' '60 Minutes' interview*, REUTERS (Feb. 4, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/cbs-turns-over-documents-fcc-probe-into-then-vp-harris-60-minutes-interview-2025-02-04/>.

¹² Callum Jones, *Trump claims new CBS owner will gift him \$20m worth of airtime after \$16m settlement*, THE GUARDIAN (Jul. 22, 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/22/trump-cbs-settlement-stephen-colbert>.

filings about the lack of merit in the President’s lawsuit—transpired after: (1) you reportedly told Paramount’s board you favored a settlement to appease the President, in part so that Paramount could secure FCC approval for its merger with Skydance;¹³ and (2) two CBS News executives bravely chose to resign rather than accept corporate interference in independent journalism.¹⁴ Paramount’s capitulation also occurred with a rapidly approaching deadline in the proposed merger, beyond which either party could terminate the agreement; this would leave Paramount “on the hook to pay Skydance a \$400 million breakup fee.”¹⁵ This sequence of events has reportedly led to Paramount’s settlement being “widely seen as a capitulation to Trump” within CBS News.¹⁶

It sets a disturbing precedent to pay President Trump to resolve his transparently unjustified claims, thereby prioritizing Paramount’s profitable merger over a defense of independent, truthful news reporting.¹⁷ Unquestionably, “[a] free press lies at the heart of our democracy and its preservation is essential to the survival of liberty. Any inroad made upon the constitutional protection of a free press tends to undermine the freedom of all men [and women] to print and to read the truth.”¹⁸ Acceding to the President’s demands by paying to settle his baseless lawsuit undermines freedom of the press and encourages the President’s lawless attack on American democracy. The settlement may already portend the demise of CBS News’ own editorial independence, as some reasonably question how the network can “hold power to account after paying it millions?”¹⁹ Beyond the news division, CBS’s recent announcement that it would cancel *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert suggests that the network will stop at nothing to ingratiate itself with President Trump.²⁰ The *Late Show*’s cancellation will conveniently silence a vocal critic of the President—who called Paramount’s settlement with Trump a “big fat bribe”—just as the Administration weighed whether to approve the Paramount-Skydance merger.²¹

The Subcommittee has launched a preliminary inquiry into the Administration’s attacks on the First Amendment and is reviewing how the President and the FCC’s actions and

¹³ Benjamin Mullin & Lauren Hirsch, *Shari Redstone Wants a Resolution on Trump Lawsuit Ahead of Skydance Deal*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 28, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/28/business/dealbook/redstone-paramount-skydance-deal.html>.

¹⁴ Michael M. Grynbaum & Benjamin Mullin, ‘60 Minutes’ Chief Resigns in Emotional Meeting: ‘The Company Is Done With Me’, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 22, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/22/business/media/cbs-60-minutes-trump-bill-owens.html>; Jason Abbruzzese & Rob Wile, *CBS News chief steps down amid tensions over Trump lawsuit*, NBC NEWS (May 19, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/media/cbs-news-chief-steps-down-over-trump-tensions-rcna207700>.

¹⁵ Lucas Manfredi, *Paramount, Skydance Ask FCC to Dismiss ‘Unwarranted’ and ‘Meritless’ Objections to \$8 Billion Merger*, THE WRAP (Jan. 3, 2025), <https://www.thewrap.com/paramount-skydance-fcc-merger-deal-objections-response/>.

¹⁶ Stephen Battaglio, *Inside CBS News: Fear, anger and a silver lining after Paramount-Trump settlement*, L.A. TIMES (July 3, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2025-07-03/cbs-news-tries-to-move-forward-after-trump-lawsuit-settlement>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Craig v. Harney*, 331 U.S. 367, 383 (1947) (Murphy, J. concurring).

¹⁹ Stephen Battaglio, *supra* note 16.

²⁰ Yurii Stasiuk & Nicole Markus, *supra* note 2.

²¹ *Id.*

Paramount's settlement erode and undermine freedom of speech and freedom of the press and bear on the laws governing mergers and acquisitions of media companies.²² Accordingly, by August 12, 2025, please provide detailed responses to the following questions. Moreover, please preserve any and all existing and future records referring or related to Paramount's settlement of President Trump's lawsuit.

1. What are the complete terms of Paramount's settlement with President Trump? Provide any records memorializing the settlement agreement.
2. Describe in detail whether and the extent to which Paramount's settlement with President Trump requires Paramount, CBS News, *60 Minutes*, or any journalist or agent thereof to issue any private or public apology to President Trump.
3. Explain in detail the extent to which you or any agent of Paramount discussed with or suggested to President Trump or any Administration official, including the FCC, settling President Trump's lawsuit, cancelling *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert, or implementing any other change to CBS News' reporting or programming in exchange for regulatory approval of the Paramount-Skydance merger.
4. Describe in detail the complete amount and purpose of any compensation, payment, or other benefit each Paramount director and executive is expected to receive as a result of the merger of Paramount and Skydance.
5. Explain in detail how CBS News will uphold and conduct independent journalism and investigative reporting of the Trump Administration following Paramount's settlement.
6. Describe in detail all discussions, negotiations, proposals, and agreements with the Trump Administration, including the FCC, regarding editorial control, changes to content and programming (including changes in editorial staff or structure), and review of political viewpoints of Paramount's stations and content.

²² Letter from The Hon. Richard Blumenthal, Ranking Member, Permanent Subcomm. on Investigations to Mr. Patrick Webre, Acting Bureau Chief, Enforcement Bureau & Ms. Erin Boone, Acting Bureau Chief, Media Bureau, Fed. Comm. Commission (Mar. 12, 2025), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025-3-12-Letter-from-Sen.-Richard-Blumenthal-to-Patrick-Webre-and-Erin-Boone.pdf>.

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Please contact the Subcommittee should you have any questions about responding to these requests. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" being more prominent.

Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations