

# United States Senate

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

February 23, 2026

## VIA EMAIL

Mr. David Ellison  
Chairman & CEO  
Paramount Skydance Corporation  
5555 Melrose Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90038

Dear Mr. Ellison:

I write regarding Paramount's apparent willingness to censor critical news and satire at the behest of the President, particularly as it is attempting to acquire Warner Bros. in part by promoting its close ties to the White House. Paramount's acquiescence to political pressure from Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") Chair Brendan Carr, preventing Stephen Colbert from airing an interview with Texas U.S. Senate candidate James Talarico, raises the alarming prospect that Paramount is willing to silence free speech to elicit political favors from the Trump Administration. I therefore write to request records and information related to Paramount's communications with the FCC and the White House, and its interventions into the editorial decisions of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*.

On February 16, 2026, Stephen Colbert announced that CBS management prevented him from airing an interview with Mr. Talarico, with management going so far as to direct Mr. Colbert to not mention the interview on television.<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Colbert, CBS mandated that *The Late Show* not show or host interviews with political candidates unless they offer equal time to all possible competitors. CBS claimed that its intervention was due to the FCC's January 21, 2026 press release that purported to reverse and narrow, without justification, the longstanding exception to the equal time rule for news interviews. While the exception has allowed *The Late Show* and other programs to interview candidates without equal time for several decades, CBS apparently abruptly chose to use the FCC announcement to pressure or require Mr. Colbert to stop the broadcast of the interview.

FCC Chair Brendan Carr's announcement clearly seeks to insert the FCC into broadcasters' editorial decisions by declaring that it will enforce the equal time rule over what it deems as programming "motivated by partisan purposes," targeting what the Chair Carr labeled

---

<sup>1</sup> The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, Rep. James Talarico On Confronting Christian Nationalism, And Strange Days In The Texas Legislature, YouTube, (Feb. 17, 2026), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiTJ7Pz\\_59A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiTJ7Pz_59A); John Koblin, *Colbert Says CBS Pulled Senate Candidate Interview*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 17, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/17/business/media/colbert-cbs-fcc-talarico-carr.html>.

“the fake news.”<sup>2</sup> As FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez stated, while the legality of the guidance is questionable, “it does represent an escalation in this FCC’s ongoing campaign to censor and control speech,”<sup>3</sup> a position taken by other experts in FCC law.<sup>4</sup> The FCC’s distortion of the equal time rule represents a radical departure from Congressional intent and decades of rulings from Democrat and Republican-led Commissions, including rulings that found Phil Donahue, Jerry Springer, Howard Stern, and Jay Leno were exempt.<sup>5</sup> While CBS claimed Mr. Colbert could host all other candidates, in practice that would require providing airtime for up to 14 other candidates, which would create exactly the “virtual blackout” that Congress sought to prevent by enacting an exception to the equal time rule in 1959.<sup>6</sup>

The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (“the Subcommittee”) is conducting a preliminary inquiry into the FCC’s abuse of power, including dubious investigations and misrepresentations of the law to silence free speech.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the Subcommittee is engaged in an inquiry into political favoritism and the apparent corruption of antitrust review under the Trump Administration, including the FCC’s review of Skydance’s acquisition of Paramount and Paramount’s attempts to acquire Warner Bros. Paramount’s decision to comply, while it is attempting to enlist the Department of Justice and White House to intervene in the Warner Bros.’ transaction, calls into question its motivations for silencing Mr. Colbert.

Pursuant to Senate Resolution 94 (119th Cong.) and PSI Rule 1, please provide information and records responsive to the following requests by March 6, 2026.

1. What role did you and other Paramount executives (including CBS management) have in the decision to require *The Late Show*, and any other programs, to follow Chair Carr’s dubious interpretation of the equal time rule? Given the clear legal and procedural deficiencies behind the new guidance, why did Paramount or CBS decide to preemptively comply, rather than stand up for the First Amendment and challenge any attempted

---

<sup>2</sup> John Hendel, *Talk radio isn’t a target of FCC’s ‘equal time’ notice, Brendan Carr says*, POLITICO (Jan. 29, 2026), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/01/29/talk-radio-isnt-a-target-of-fccs-equal-time-memo-brendan-carr-says-00755660>.

<sup>3</sup> Press Release, Office of Commissioner Anna M. Gomez, Gomez on Latest FCC Effort to Pressure Broadcasters And Chill Speech, (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-418165A1.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, FIRE statement on Stephen Colbert’s James Talarico interview and continued FCC pressure, (Feb. 17, 2026), <https://www.thefire.org/news/fire-statement-stephen-colberts-james-talarico-interview-and-continued-fcc-pressure>.

<sup>5</sup> See Staff Ruling, In Re Request of Multimedia Entertainment, Inc. For Declaratory Ruling, 9 FCC Rcd No. 13, (June 13, 1994), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-94-631A1.pdf>; Declaratory Ruling, In re Request of Infinity Broadcasting Operations Inc. For Declaratory Ruling, DA 03-2865, (Sept. 9, 2003), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-03-2865A1.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Judd Legum, Rebecca Crosby, and Noel Sims, *CBS censors Colbert, bowing to pressure from Trump’s FCC*, POPULAR INFORMATION (Feb. 18, 2026), <https://popular.info/p/cbs-censors-colbert-bowing-to-pressure>; S. Rept. No. 562, 86th Cong., 1st Session, Equal Time Amendment to Communications Act of 1934, 10, [https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/SERIALSET-12151\\_00\\_00-080-0562-0000/pdf/SERIALSET-12151\\_00\\_00-080-0562-0000.pdf](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/SERIALSET-12151_00_00-080-0562-0000/pdf/SERIALSET-12151_00_00-080-0562-0000.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See Letter from The Hon. Richard Blumenthal, Ranking Member, Permanent Subcomm. on Investigations to Mr. Patrick Webre, Acting Bureau Chief, Enforcement Bureau and Ms. Erin Boone, Acting Bureau Chief, Media Bureau, Fed. Communications 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>.

enforcement?

2. What communications did Paramount (including yourself, and other Paramount and CBS executives) have with the FCC or White House about the equal time rule, including the decision to require Stephen Colbert to comply with Chair Carr's equal time rule guidance?
3. Please provide all records related to any attempts by Paramount to enforce Chair Carr's January 21 guidance, including but not limited to records related to the decision to prevent Colbert from airing the interview of Mr. Talarico and guidance provided to *The Late Show*.
4. Has Paramount required programs other than *The Late Show* to comply with Chair Carr's equal time rule? If so, what guidance has been provided to editorial staff about the requirements for compliance?

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

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson  
Chairman  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations