

United States Senate

September 18, 2025

Brendan Carr
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Carr,

We are outraged by your comments yesterday on a podcast suggesting that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) would take action against ABC, its parent company Disney, and its affiliates, over comments made by comedian Jimmy Kimmel on his late-night show. It is not simply unacceptable for the FCC Chairman to threaten a media organization because he does not like the content of its programming—it violates the First Amendment that you claim to champion. The FCC’s role in overseeing the public airwaves does not give it the power to act as a roving press censor, targeting broadcasters based on their political commentary. But under your leadership, the FCC is being weaponized to do precisely that.

During an appearance on the Benny Johnson podcast on Wednesday, you suggested the FCC would consider revoking the broadcast licenses of ABC affiliates in response to comments made by Kimmel on his late-night talk show following the assassination of Charlie Kirk. You proceeded to threaten that the FCC “can do this the easy way or the hard way,” and telegraphed that “there’s going to be additional work for the FCC ahead” unless ABC affiliates “find ways to change conduct and take action, frankly, on Kimmel[.]”¹

These statements are outrageous and a betrayal of the FCC’s mission. Although broadcasters are obligated to act in the public interest—in return for receiving access to the public airwaves—this requirement does not give the FCC Chairman the authority to act as the speech police and force broadcasters to adopt political viewpoints that you favor. Under your leadership, the FCC appears to be discarding Congress’s clear directive in the Communications Act to ensure broadcasters act in the “public interest”—and is instead requiring them to act in “Trump’s interest.” This approach is an anathema to the Constitution.

The consequences of your comments were quickly apparent. Hours later, Nexstar—a major owner of ABC affiliates that has a significant merger pending before the FCC—announced that it would take Kimmel off the air.² Soon thereafter, Disney announced it was

¹ See, e.g., Gene Maddaus, *FCC Chairman Threatens ABC Over Jimmy Kimmel’s Remarks About Charlie Kirk’s Killer*, Variety (Sept. 17, 2025), <https://variety.com/2025/tv/news/brendan-carr-abc-fcc-jimmy-kimmel-charlie-kirk-1236522406/>.

² Press Release, Nexstar, *Nexstar ABC Affiliates To Preempt “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” Indefinitely Beginning Tonight* (Sept. 17, 2025), <https://www.nexstar.tv/nexstar-abc-affiliates-to-preempt-jimmy-kimmel-live-indefinitely-beginning-tonight/>.

indefinitely suspending his show altogether.³ This is precisely what government censorship looks like.

In fact, before assuming your role as President Trump's FCC Chairman, you publicly condemned perceived attempts "by government officials to silence political speech they don't like."⁴ You also defended comedians and talk show hosts' right to incorporate politics into their acts, posting: "From Internet memes to late-night comedians, from cartoons to the plays and poems as old as organized government itself - Political Satire circumvents traditional gatekeepers & helps hold those in power accountable. Not surprising that it's long been targeted for censorship."⁵ And you rightly rejected government censorship as a threat to our First Amendment protections, posting: "Free speech is not a threat to democracy—censorship is."⁶ But as FCC Chairman, you now have apparently forgotten these principles.

We urge you to immediately stop threatening media organizations due to their programming and return to the FCC's mission of ensuring all Americans have access to affordable, efficient communication services.

Additionally, to ensure we fully understand the implications of your recent comments, we expect you to respond in writing to the following questions by September 25, 2025:

1. How is the FCC defining the "public interest" standard to which broadcasters must adhere? To the extent that the FCC has adopted some new ideological or political neutrality test, how is the FCC defining ideological or political bias?
2. Did you, your staff, or any FCC staff have any communication with Disney, ABC, or their affiliates about Jimmy Kimmel, his Monday monologue, or his show between Monday, September 15, and today? If yes, we expect you to produce copies of all such communications.
3. You publicly stated that ABC and Disney could "do this the easy way or the hard way." Please detail the "easy way" and the "hard way" you were referencing in making this statement.

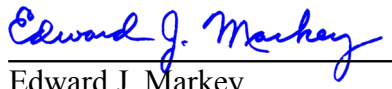
Sincerely,

³ See, e.g., Joe Flint, *Disney Pulls Jimmy Kimmel's Show After Kirk Remarks* (Sept. 17, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/business/media/disney-to-pull-jimmy-kimmels-show-after-kirk-remarks-47b4b400>.

⁴ Brendan Carr (@BrendanCarrFCC), X (Feb. 8, 2022, 5:33 PM), <https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/1226272840615419904>.

⁵ Brendan Carr (@BrendanCarrFCC), X (Feb. 20, 2020, 10:18 PM), <https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/1230693195828400129>.

⁶ Brendan Carr (@BrendanCarrFCC), X (Nov. 29, 2022, 6:41 PM), <https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/1597737439065669632>.



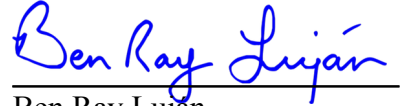
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



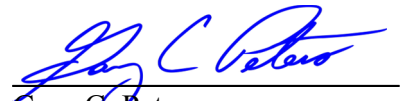
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



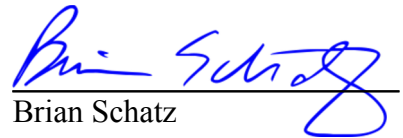
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator




Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator