

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Debra OConnell
Chairman, Disney Entertainment Television
7 Hudson Square
New York, NY 10013

Dear Chairman OConnell,

The American Broadcasting Company is living up to its name by standing up for a vital American value.

Our 15 press freedom organizations commend ABC on its recent [filing with the Federal Communications Commission](#), accusing the agency of actions that threaten to “chill critical protected speech.” The FCC had [set its sights on *The View*](#), one of the network’s talk shows, by contorting equal time rules and targeting a single local station licensed by the agency.

President Donald Trump once basked in the attention of *The View*, [making 18 appearances](#). But he eventually would lash out at its hosts as [“degenerates” and “dumb women.”](#) His White House even issued a statement suggesting that if a host didn’t curtail her “jealousy” of Trump, the [“show is the next to be pulled off-air.”](#)

Trump’s personal grievances are concerning because FCC Chairman Brendan Carr has declared that the agency is [no longer independent and instead serves at the pleasure of the president](#). This puts ABC’s 52-page response on behalf of its show at a critical time for an entire industry – and for free speech itself.

The network and its parent company Disney are no strangers to Trump’s hypocritical and often unconstitutional cancel culture. ABC previously caved [to an extortive civil lawsuit](#), coughing up \$15 million to his presidential library – plus an additional \$1 million in legal fees. Trump included the incident in [a social media boast](#) about ways he’s “reshaping the media,” including the departure of an ABC journalist and Disney ending “key DEI practices.”

Team Trump’s latest frivolous legal theory against ABC is destined to fail. In fact, media companies have proven successful when they stand up to this administration’s bullying in court. A judge [repeatedly ruled in favor of the New York Times](#) in a lawsuit to restore press access at the Pentagon. [Multiple judges have denied DOJ efforts](#) to search data seized from a Washington Post reporter. Watchdog Media Matters for America celebrated a [resounding legal victory to end a retaliatory investigation](#) by Trump’s Federal Trade Commission.

ABC also knows this is a winning approach. Last year, they stumbled briefly when they suspended talk show host Jimmy Kimmel over a monologue joke that offended the Trump administration. But within days, they found their footing and put him back on the air. It was the

[second most-watched broadcast in the show's 23 year history](#), and [ratings have remained strong ever since](#). Kimmel's return episode included this blistering quote:

If we don't have free speech, then we just don't have a free country. It's as simple as that. If this most fundamental right is allowed to perish, then the rest of our rights and liberties will topple. Just like dominoes, one by one, they'll go down.

The words weren't spoken by Kimmel, though. It was an [old clip he played of Trump](#).

The president again aired public grievances over a Kimmel joke last month. Within three days, the FCC announced an early review of licenses for eight local stations owned by ABC (ostensibly about diversity practices, but fooling nobody). The network issued a statement indicating that [it would fight back](#). We also support them in this matter and hope their defense is as vigorous as they're demonstrating with *The View*.

Support for ABC's free speech transcends partisan lines. The lone Democratic FCC Commissioner, [Anna Gomez](#), wrote that Disney is the target of a censorship campaign. But vocal backing has also come from Republican Senator [Ted Cruz](#), talk show host [Glenn Beck](#) and comedian [Adam Carolla](#).

While Trump and Carr may be erratic, the media business must remain consistent and strong on behalf of all American broadcasting companies.

In support,

Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ)
Common Cause
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Free Press
International Documentary Association
Journalism & Women Symposium (JAWS)
The Media and Democracy Project
The National Press Club
National Press Club Journalism Institute
PEN America
Project Censored
Radio Television Digital News Association
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Society of Environmental Journalists
Society of Professional Journalists