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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Kimmel Flashpoint: Some Talking, Some Quiet as Censorship Claims Swirl

It's been quite the 24 hours in the media world, evidenced by [this post](#) on social media last night by Scripps-owned WMAR, an ABC station in Baltimore: "Please don't call the newsroom and yell at us. We are learning about this just as you are. As soon as we get more details we will share. Feel free to vent in the comments."

Indeed, there has been plenty of venting on all sides over ABC's decision to take "Jimmy Kimmel Live" off the air indefinitely and replacing it (at least for this week) with "Celebrity Family Feud." It came shortly after Nexstar, the largest broadcast station owner, announced it was pre-empting the late-night talker for the foreseeable future because of [comments](#) Kimmel made concerning the killing of Charlie Kirk. Sinclair, the nation's largest ABC affiliate group, followed suit. Those decisions were announced hours after FCC Chair Brendan Carr [called out](#) Kimmel on "The Benny Show" podcast and suggested that broadcast station groups push back against the content they're getting from national network owners like Disney and Comcast or potentially face fines or risk losing their licenses.

And of course, all of this comes as the FCC is contemplating relaxing broadcast ownership rules and the 39% national audience cap—a necessity for Nexstar's proposed \$6.2 billion TEGNA acquisition. There's also President Trump's own comments in July following Stephen Colbert's cancellation at Paramount, in which he suggested "Kimmel is next." Accord-

ing to *The New York Times*, Trump [suggested](#) Thursday that a network's "license should be taken away" if it has late night hosts that speak too negatively about him.

Now he's shifted his focus to NBC's Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers, which should make for some interesting late-night monologues—not to mention episodes of **Comedy Central's** "South Park" with this week's new ep delayed because it wasn't finished in time. News broke that Jon Stewart will host "The Daily Show" tonight—a sure sign he has something to say since he normally only hosts Mondays.

While Carr made the news show TV circuit over the past 24 hours and Democratic FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez issued protests against "government censorship," it seems the agency's third commissioner would prefer to stay away from the issue. During a speech at **The Free State Foundation** Thursday, Republican Commissioner Olivia Trusty stuck to the importance of broadband for all, enhancing public safety and national security and leadership in next-gen technologies.

Thankfully, she took two questions from the audience, which—surprise—were both about the Kimmel situation. The first probed her views on Carr's statements and how they square with First Amendment rights of local broadcasters. "I believe firmly in the First Amendment. I think it protects fundamental freedoms that are essential to the functioning of a democratic society. Broadcasters have privileged access to spectrum, and as a result, they are expected to operate in the public interest," Trusty said. "As a result, as we saw yesterday,

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Nexstar and Sinclair made a business decision to remove or at least suspend the Jimmy Kimmel show because they did not believe it was in the public interest for their viewers. What the Chairman said, I'm not his spokesperson, I'll defer to him to explain that. But under the law, we have a responsibility to make sure broadcasters are complying with their public interest obligations and that's what I committed to doing."

Another questioner asked her to weigh in on whether there are limits for satire and what can be said on TV without drawing the ire of the FCC. Trusty said everything is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but repeated her comments on public interest obligations and Nexstar and Sinclair drawing their own lines. Over on X, California Gov. [Gavin Newsom](#) [revived](#) a 2022 Carr post about satire that said: "President *Biden* is right. Political satire is one of the oldest and most important forms of free speech. It challenges those in power while using humor to draw more people in to the discussion. That's why people in influential positions have always targeted it for censorship." Newsom added: "This aged well."

While Kimmel is a nonstop headline, The Free State Foundation event in D.C. mostly ignored it. However, Free State Founder *Randolph May* seemed to indirectly touch on it at the start, noting that he liked holding the gathering in the National Press Club's First Amendment room. "I consider defending free speech and securing First Amendment rights to be a key component of The Free State Foundation's mission," he said. "I want to say this, even more so now in the wake of Charlie Kirk's murder. In my view, it's incumbent on all of us to do all we can to encourage and foster respectful debate and to be tolerant of opposing viewpoints and to be willing to listen to them." He went on to add that FSF tries to promote "civil discourse" among those with differing perspectives, calling out how **Public Knowledge's** *Harold Feld* and *Chris Lewis* have opposing views but are among the think tank's most frequent guests at its annual conference.

Also quiet Thursday was the **National Association of Broadcasters**, which did not respond to **CFX's** requests for comment. There will be plenty more to talk about in the days and weeks ahead, with Rep. *Ro Khanna* (D-CA) unsuccessfully trying during a **House Oversight Committee** to subpoena Carr and "have him explain to the American people why he is bullying private individuals." The NYT reports committee leadership agreed to work together to bring Carr to the Hill to testify.

House Commerce Ranking Member *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ) took to the House floor to call for Carr's resignation: "We need to be clear about two things. One, all Jimmy Kimmel did was speak. And two, it's not freedom when a private company decides to shut down speech to avoid punishment from the

government. That needs to end now, and that means Chairman Carr should resign."

DEM LEADERS WANT ANSWERS FROM CARR ON KIMMEL

FCC Chair *Brendan Carr's* inbox must have been burning Thursday. "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,'" said a missive Thursday from "outraged" Democratic senators *Chuck Schumer* (NY), *Ed Markey* (MA), *Maria Cantwell* (WA) and *Ben Ray Lujan* (NM). They urged him to "stop threatening media organizations" and to answer a series of questions by Sept. 25. They want to know how the FCC is defining the public interest standard and whether Carr or any FCC staff have had communications with **Disney**, **ABC** or their affiliates about Kimmel this week (and if yes, to turn it over). They also stated: "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."

STUDY: CABLE SUBS STAYING PUT DESPITE LOW SATISFACTION

J.D. Power's 2025 U.S. Television Service Provider Study found that cable customers are sticking with their providers despite lower satisfaction levels than streaming. The firm named a few reasons why this is the case: barriers such as restrictive contracts, limited provider availability by location and the complexity to switching to someone else. Cable TV received a satisfaction score of 531 (that's out of 1,000), while streamers scored 630. That said, the study found that streaming services actually see greater customer turnover despite the higher satisfaction. "Many customers choose cable because of bundled TV and internet offerings, an option that streaming providers typically don't offer. In areas with limited internet provider availability, bundling becomes even more common. While live streaming services may offer greater flexibility and higher satisfaction, they also face higher turnover," said *Carl Lepper*, Sr. Director, Technology, Media & Telecom Intelligence. Of the cable/satellite providers measured, **Verizon Fios** ranked

highest with a score of 577, followed by **Charter Spectrum** with 536 and **Comcast Xfinity** in third with 533. Meanwhile, **YouTube TV** ranks highest in the streaming segment, with a score of 649. It's the third year in a row it has led streamers.

TUBI LAUNCHES AT-WORK STREAMING TOOL

Tubi doesn't want its dedicated users to stop streaming just because their jobs have mandated that they return to their stuffy offices. The **Fox**-owned AVOD service announced that it's launched a new Chrome browser extension designed to help **Tubi** fans stream smarter and "sneakier" while at work. The extension, which the streamer is calling "Productubity," allows viewers to toggle from **Tubi** to a fake work screen with a single click in order to trick their supervisors. **Tubi** also curated a "Workday Playlist" of content perfect for streaming while on the job. "This tool is our way of helping fans reclaim their time and their tabs. It's a wink to the modern multitasker who knows how to balance the deadlines with drama," said *Deirdre Hesseldieck*, SVP, Viewer Product. The streamer said that Productubity is inspired by data from a recent study it conducted, which found that 85% of Gen Z workers watch TV or movies while working, while 38% say they stream at their job site. Nearly 28% of Gen Z workers admitted to lying to their bosses about streaming while working.

CARRIAGE

Sports Fanatics' and *Whoopi Goldberg's* **FAST** channel **All Women's Sports** snagged carriage on **MyFree DirectTV** platform. The curated **FAST** offering, which launched in November, already includes **FAST Studios' Women's Sports Network**. Also newly added to the lineup are **Triple-B Media's Billiard TV** and **Navio Networks' Wired2fish TV**.

FIBER FRENZY

unWired Broadband announced that it's connecting nearly 6,000 addresses in Wasco, California to the **NextGen Fiber** network. The \$10 million project will deliver speeds of up to 5 Gigs to the city, with construc-

tion slated to continue throughout the rest of the year, with an expected completion date of February 2026. The ISP is hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the expansion in Wasco on Sept. 25 at 9am. – **Lumos**, now part of **T-Mobile Fiber**, broke ground in Illinois, marking its 10th state of operation. The 3,000-mile project will span nearly 300,000 addresses across more than 20 Chicagoland communities, including Naperville, Schaumburg, Hoffman Estates, Wheaton and Bolingbrook. – **Comcast** announced the start of construction to connect nearly 12,000 homes and businesses in Westport, Connecticut to **Xfinity** Internet, Mobile, X1 and Home services as well as **Comcast Business** products. – **Metronet** broke ground on its fiber network expansion in the Colorado communities of Castle Rock and Castle Pines.

PROGRAMMING

After a successful drop as a binge watch on **Peacock** a few weeks ago, "The Paper" is making its linear debut this fall. The sitcom will premiere on **NBC** on Nov. 10. – Fresh off Emmy wins for Apple's "The Studio," *Seth Rogen* is next set to revive "The Muppet Show" for **Disney+** with a new special set for 2026, just in time for the iconic variety show's 50th anniversary. The special will be executive produced and star *Sabrina Carpenter*.

PEOPLE

Vernon Sanders is exiting as **Amazon MGM Studios'** Head of TV after seven years at the company. He joined in 2018 from **NBCUniversal**, where he was NBC EVP, Current Programming. – **Paramount Skydance** announced that **Scale AI** CFO *Dennis Cinelli* will join its board as an independent director. The company said that Cinelli's "extensive experience in strategic transactions and active engagement within the AI ecosystem make him a valuable resource in advancing Paramount's growth objectives."

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not be publishing Friday, Sept. 19. The next issue will land in inboxes Monday, Sept. 22.

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (09/08/25-09/14/25)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.929	2990
ESPN	0.764	2458
MSNBC	0.262	844
CNN	0.187	601
HGTV	0.168	542
USA	0.146	471
HALL	0.112	360
TLC	0.112	360
TBS	0.108	347
FOOD	0.103	333
INSP	0.102	328
TVLAND	0.098	316
DISC	0.094	301
GSN	0.091	293
HIST	0.086	277
ID	0.080	257
ESPN2	0.077	249
NWSMX	0.077	248
LIFE	0.073	235
A&E	0.071	230
HALLMYS	0.064	206
OXY	0.061	197
NFL	0.058	187
FX	0.057	182
ADSM	0.055	176
WETV	0.055	175
AMC	0.053	171
NAN	0.052	166
REELZ	0.050	160
BRAVO	0.048	155
BET	0.048	154
COM	0.047	151
NEWSN	0.047	151
MLB	0.044	143
PRMNT	0.044	143
NATGEO	0.044	141
LMN	0.043	139
IFC	0.043	138
TNT	0.043	138
MTV	0.040	130
TRAVEL	0.039	127
FRFM	0.037	120
E!	0.037	119
FS1	0.037	118
SYFY	0.033	107
SUND	0.032	103
MAGN	0.032	102

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.