

ENTERTAINMENT

Stephen Colbert's 'Late Show' is canceled by CBS and will end in May 2026



1 of 2 | CBS is canceling "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" next May, shuttering a decades-old TV institution in a changing media landscape and removing from air one of President Donald Trump's most prominent and persistent late-night critics. (July 18) [Read More](#)

BY [DAVID BAUDER](#), [ALICIA RANCILIO](#) AND [ANDREW DALTON](#)

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CBS is canceling "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" next May, shuttering a decades-old TV institution in a changing media landscape and removing from air one of President Donald Trump's

most prominent and persistent late-night critics.

CBS said “Late Show” was canceled for financial reasons, not for content. But the timing — three days after Colbert criticized the [settlement between Trump and Paramount Global](#), parent company of CBS, over a “60 Minutes” story — led two U.S. senators to publicly question the motives.

Colbert told his audience at New York’s Ed Sullivan Theater that he had learned Wednesday night that, after a decade on air, “next year will be our last season. ... It’s the end of ‘The Late Show’ on CBS. I’m not being replaced. This is all just going away.”

The audience responded with boos and groans.

“Yeah, I share your feelings,” the 61-year-old comic said.

Three top Paramount and CBS executives praised Colbert’s show as “a staple of the nation’s zeitgeist” in a statement that said the cancellation “is purely a financial decision against a challenging backdrop in late night. It is not related in any way to the show’s performance, content or other matters happening at Paramount.”

Colbert and Trump

In his Monday monologue, Colbert said he was “offended” by the [\\$16 million settlement](#) reached by Paramount, whose pending sale to Skydance Media needs the Trump administration’s approval. He said the technical name in legal circles for the deal was “big fat bribe.”

“I don’t know if anything — anything — will repair my trust in this company,” Colbert said. “But, just taking a stab at it, I’d say \$16 million would help.”

Trump had sued Paramount Global over how “60 Minutes” edited its interview last fall with Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris. Critics say the company settled primarily to clear a hurdle to the Skydance sale.

The president — a longtime target of Colbert — on Friday said on Truth Social that “I absolutely love” that Colbert was “fired.” In his message, he insulted the late-night hosts on ABC, CBS and NBC.

“I hear (ABC’s) Jimmy Kimmel is next,” Trump wrote. “Has even less talent than Colbert. (Fox News Channel’s) Greg Gutfeld is better than all of them, including the Moron on NBC who ruined the once great Tonight show.”

Colbert took over “The Late Show” in 2015 after becoming a big name in comedy and news satire working on Comedy Central with Jon Stewart on “The Daily Show” and hosting “The Colbert Report,” which riffed on right-wing talk shows. The guests on his very first show in September 2015

were actor George Clooney and Jeb Bush, who was then struggling in his Republican presidential primary campaign against Trump.

“Gov. Bush was the governor of Florida for eight years,” Colbert told his audience. “And you would think that that much exposure to oranges and crazy people would have prepared him for Donald Trump. Evidently not.”

The most recent ratings from Nielsen show Colbert gaining viewers so far this year and winning his timeslot among broadcasters, with about 2.417 million viewers across 41 new episodes. On Tuesday, Colbert’s “Late Show” landed its sixth Emmy nomination for outstanding talk show. It won a Peabody Award in 2021.

David Letterman began hosting “The Late Show” in 1993. When Colbert took over, he deepened its engagement with politics. Alongside musicians and movie stars, Colbert often welcomes politicians to his couch.

The late-night world reacts

Democratic [U.S. Sen. Adam Schiff](#) of California was a guest on Thursday night. Schiff said on X that “if Paramount and CBS ended the Late Show for political reasons, the public deserves to know. And deserves better.” Democratic U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts released a similar statement.

Colbert’s counterpart on ABC, Kimmel, posted “Love you Stephen” on Instagram and directed an expletive at CBS.

“I’m just as shocked as everyone,” NBC “Tonight” show host Jimmy Fallon said Friday on Instagram. “Stephen is one of the sharpest, funniest hosts to ever do it. I really thought I’d ride this out with him for years to come.”

“They’re trying to silence people, but that won’t work. Won’t work. We will just get louder,” actor Jamie Lee Curtis, who has previously criticized Trump and is set to visit Colbert’s show in coming days, told the AP.

Late-night TV has been facing economic pressures for years; ratings and ad revenue are down and many young viewers prefer highlights online, which networks have trouble monetizing. CBS also recently canceled host Taylor Tomlinson’s “After Midnight,” which aired after “The Late Show.”

Still, Colbert had led the network late-night competition for years. And while NBC has acknowledged economic pressures by eliminating the band on Seth Meyers’ show and cutting one night of Jimmy Fallon’s “The Tonight Show,” there had been no such visible efforts at “The Late Show.”

Colbert's relentless criticism of Trump, his denunciation of the settlement, and the parent company's pending sale can't be ignored, said Bill Carter, author of "The Late Shift."

"If CBS thinks people are just going to swallow this, they're really deluded," Carter said.

Andy Cohen, who began his career at CBS and now hosts "Watch What Happens Live," said in an interview: "It is a very sad day for CBS that they are getting out of the late-night race. I mean, they are turning off the lights after the news."

AP journalist Liam McEwan contributed reporting.



DAVID BAUDER

Bauder was the AP's national media writer, covering the intersection of news, politics and entertainment. He retired in May 2026.



ALICIA RANCILIO

Rancilio covers entertainment for The Associated Press using video and text. She primarily focuses on television.



ANDREW DALTON

Dalton covers entertainment for The Associated Press, with an emphasis on crime, courts and obituaries. He has worked for the AP for 20 years and is based in Los Angeles.

