

## Garrison Keillor cut by Minnesota Public Radio

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USA TODAY

Garrison Keillor, creator of *A Prairie Home Companion*, was evicted from his longtime radio home at Minnesota Public Radio after two employees reported “improper behavior” by the 75-year-old host.



**Garrison Keillor**

MPR communication director Angie Andresen confirmed his dismissal in a statement posted to the broadcaster’s website Wednesday that did not go into detail about the nature of the allegations. The organization announced it would “end its business relationship with Keillor’s media companies effective immediately.”

The broadcaster will erase Keillor, one of public radio’s most famous voices, from its airwaves and website, renaming *Companion*, the variety show he created in 1974 and hosted until 2016, when he retired and handed over creative control to his handpicked replacement, musician Chris Thile. MPR will no longer air rebroadcasts of Keillor’s old show, nor will it produce or distribute his remaining syndicated series *The Writer’s Almanac*.

### What happened?

Andresen said, “Last month, MPR was notified of the allegations which

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## Keillor

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relate to Mr. Keillor's conduct while he was responsible for the production of *A Prairie Home Companion*." MPR President Jon McTaggart initiated an inquiry using an outside law firm.

Keillor told his hometown newspaper, the *Star Tribune* in Minneapolis, that in one case, he simply "put my hand on a woman's bare back" while attempting to console her. "I meant to pat her back after she told me about her unhappiness, and her shirt was open and my hand went up it about 6 inches. She recoiled. I apologized. I sent her an email of apology later, and she replied that she had forgiven me and not to think about it. We were

friends. We continued to be friendly right up until her lawyer called."

Newspapers that run Keillor's syndicated columns must decide whether his infractions warrant cutting ties. Azhar AlFadl Miranda, a publicist for *The Washington Post*, told USA TODAY his outlet "takes allegations of this kind seriously and is seeking more information about them."

### What of his legacy?

Given that the allegations came more than a year after Keillor stepped down from *Companion*, how will they mar his nearly half-century broadcasting career? It's too soon to guess, said Michael Harrison, publisher of the trade journal *Talkers Magazine*.

"The industry and the broadcasting community have got to get used to

the idea that now he's on 'the list,'" he said. "And I think we will see how this settles over the next few months when this becomes less of a current phenomenon."

He said Keillor "is in the very special position and category of being a unique entity in broadcasting. He was an unusual broadcaster, a great storyteller, a very homespun, eclectic kind of guy."

In a statement to MPR, Keillor expressed concern that the "country is caught in the grip of a mania" over reporting sexual misconduct and that he wishes someone would resist. But he was customarily pragmatic, noting, "I expect MPR to look out for itself, and meanwhile, I feel awfully lucky to have hung on for so long."

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