



LEILA NAVIDI/Minneapolis Star Tribune

GARRISON KEILLOR, pictured last year at a rehearsal, says he inadvertently touched a woman's bare back as he tried to console her. Allegations of harassment also led to the firing of NPR's David Sweeney this week.

Radio star Keillor is fired

Former 'Prairie Home Companion' host is accused of unwanted touching. NPR news editor is also ousted.

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Two public radio stalwarts lost their jobs this week after allegations of misconduct and sexual harassment: Garrison Keillor, the former host of "A Prairie Home Companion," and David Sweeney, National Public Radio's chief news editor.

Keillor said Wednesday that Minnesota Public Radio fired him over "a story that I think is more interesting and more complicated than the version MPR heard."

He told the Minneapolis Star Tribune he had put his hand on a woman's bare

back when trying to console her.

"I meant to pat her back ... and her shirt was open and my hand went up it about six inches. She recalled. I apologized," Keillor told the newspaper in an email. "I sent her an email of apology later, and she replied that she had forgiven me and not to think about it."

Minnesota Public Radio confirmed it had terminated contracts with Keillor after receiving an allegation against him last month of "inappropriate behavior." It said the allegation stemmed from Keillor's conduct when he was producing and hosting his long-running radio variety show.

Minnesota Public Radio said it knew of no other allegations but had retained a law firm that continues to investigate.

The name of "A Prairie Home Companion" will be changed, Minnesota Public

Radio said. It also said it would end distribution of "The Writer's Almanac," Keillor's daily reading of a poem and telling of literary events, and end rebroadcasts of "The Best of A Prairie Home Companion" hosted by Keillor.

Keillor retired as host of "A Prairie Home Companion" in 2016, after four decades. He hand-picked his successor — mandolinist Chris Thile — and continued to work with the radio network on other projects.

Thile tweeted Wednesday that he was "in shock" over Keillor's firing. He said he knew nothing about the allegation, adding: "I trust that the proper steps are being taken." Sue Scott, a long-time voice actor on the show, said she had witnessed no evidence of inappropriate behavior by Keillor.

Separately, NPR reported Tuesday that Sweeney had stepped down from his role as chief news

editor following accusations by at least three current and former NPR journalists. His departure came after NPR conducted a formal internal review into his conduct.

An NPR spokeswoman confirmed that Sweeney no longer worked for the organization. "We take all reports very seriously," she said. "NPR will not comment about specific complaints or personnel matters."

The Washington, D.C.-based news agency reported that the complaints against Sweeney were filed after Mike Oreskes — NPR's top news executive — was forced to resign Nov. 1 over sexual misconduct allegations.

The accusations against Sweeney include an unwanted kiss and an attempted kiss, as well as unwanted attention and gifts to a subordinate, according to the NPR report.

Times staff writer David Ng contributed to this report.