

Listeners voice displeasure

Minnesotans rip MPR over decision to drop Keillor

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MPR News

ST. PAUL — Hundreds of Minnesotans are expressing anger, disappointment and disbelief over Minnesota Public Radio's decision to cut ties with Garrison Keillor following what MPR's parent company described as inappropriate behavior.

Within 24 hours of the news breaking Wednesday, more than 400 people had made their feelings known through MPR's Public Insight Network. Meanwhile, discussions on the MPR News

Facebook page had generated more than 25,000 words, enough to fill a 100-page book. "In my mind it is not fair for one slight isolated incident to tear down a great man and negate his tremendous contributions," wrote Laurie Grotnes of Moorhead, Minn.

"I would like to better understand the infraction that Mr. Keillor committed," wrote Jim Weygand from Carver County. "The country seems to have gone on a feeding frenzy over sexual harassment. It does not seem to matter whether you have sexually assaulted someone or if you put your hand where it did not belong whether accidentally or purposefully."



LEILA NAVIDI, MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

Garrison Keillor appears during a live broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion" at the State Theatre in May 2016 in Minneapolis.

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Keillor

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Dozens of people said they planned to cancel their MPR memberships, including Bridget George of Anoka, who called in on Thursday morning. She said she wants a fuller explanation from MPR officials.

"I think a lot of politics go into these decisions," she said. "I would be curious to know what other things were going on that might have motivated the board to take that action."

George said Keillor spoke at a fundraiser at her church last year. She was shocked when she read the news in her inbox on Wednesday. "He's a kind, caring, compassionate person, and I just think we should remember the whole person when we think about consequences for behavior."

Some Facebook and email commenters accused MPR of "McCarthyism" and called MPR's investigation of Keillor's conduct a "witch hunt." Others asked for a more complete explanation of the accusations from the company.

Others expressed sadness. Belle Scott of Minneapolis said she was distressed by the Keillor news as well as the recent reports of sexual misconduct by Minnesota U.S. Sen. Al Franken.

"I am very sorry for those who are abused, sorry for the abusers who had no clue about women's boundaries and sorry for us who will be deprived of their wit and wisdom from more innocent days," she wrote.

Leaders of MPR and its parent company, American Public Media said Wednesday the allegations relate to Keillor's "inappropriate behavior" while he was responsible for the production of "A Prairie Home Companion."

They came to the company's attention last month and were referred to a special committee of its board for investigation, APM chief executive Jon Meckert said.

APM leaders have declined significant comment beyond the statement posted by the company on Wednesday. It said Keillor was dropped as the company investigated allegations of his "inappropriate behavior with an individual who worked with him." It also noted that while the investigation continues, "based on what we currently know, there are no similar allegations involving other staff."

In an email to the Star Tribune, Keillor wrote: "I put my hand on a woman's bare back. I meant to put her back after she told me about her unhappiness and her shirt was open and my hand went up it about six 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."