

TOP TALKER

Garrison Keillor firing by MPR prompts backlash from his fans

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Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Outraged Garrison Keillor fans deluged Minnesota Public Radio Thursday with complaints about the firing of the humorist over alleged workplace misconduct.

Some say they will no longer support MPR, one of the nation's largest public radio operations, which depends heavily on financial contributions.

MPR said Wednesday it was cutting ties with Keillor, creator and former host of the popular public radio show "A Prairie Home Companion," over an allegation of workplace misconduct. The network did not give details, but Keillor told the Minneapolis Star Tribune that he had put his hand on a woman's bare back while trying to console her.

Minnesota Public Radio News said that dozens of people planned to cancel their MPR memberships.

Bridget George of Anoka says she wants a fuller explanation from the network. She said Keillor spoke at a fundraiser at her church last year and is a "kind, caring, compassionate person."

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

More than 400 people had expressed themselves through MPR's Public Insight Network within 24 hours of the news breaking. Discussions on the MPR News Facebook page had generated more than 25,000



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In this July 26, 2017 file photo, Garrison Keillor, creator and former host of, "A Prairie Home Companion," talks at his St. Paul, Minn., office.

words, enough to fill a 100-page book.

While many fans supported Keillor, the professional fallout for the popular radio personality continued on Thursday.

The Washington Post said it won't distribute any more columns by Keillor because he didn't reveal he was under investigation in his most recent column. Keillor's last column criticized calls for Minnesota U.S. Sen. Al Franken to resign over allegations of sexual misconduct.

Washington Post editorial page editor Fred Hiatt said Keillor's column failed a basic transparency test. The Post had syndicated Keillor's column after his retirement from "A Prairie Home Companion."

According to its 2016 financial report, St. Paul-based MPR and its parent company, American Public

Media, received 63 percent of its revenue that fiscal year from the public. Of that public support, \$21 million was from individual gifts and memberships.

Angie Andresen, a spokeswoman for MPR and APM, said the trust that listeners and supporters have in MPR "is of utmost importance to us," so the network is concerned if members end their support.

"We want to assure that this decision honors the highest standards of diligence for the facts and the bedrock principles they've come to expect from us," Andresen told The Associated Press in an email.

MPR has said it received allegations of "inappropriate behavior" against Keillor last month involving one person who worked with him during his time hosting "Prairie Home." MPR did not

elaborate on the allegation.

Keillor told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune that he meant to pat the woman on the back but, "her shirt was open and my hand went up it about six inches. She recoiled. I apologized," Keillor said. "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."

Keillor retired as host of the radio variety show last year, but the Saturday evening show continues with mandolinist Chris Thile as host.

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