



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 19, 2017

## Bill O'Reilly to Leave Fox News

It's Bill O'Reilly's history of sexual harassment, and not his false conservatism, that will end his career as host of his *The O'Reilly Factor*, according to two stories in the *Wall Street Journal*. Joe Flint, writing for the *Journal*, [said](#) the "final resolution on the fate of Mr. O'Reilly ... could come as early as the next several days."

That resolution could come even sooner as the co-chairmen of Fox News — Rupert Murdoch and his two sons, Lachlan and James — meet in private on Thursday to finalize the matter. According to Flint's sources, Rupert is pushing to keep O'Reilly while his two sons have concluded it's time for Fox News and O'Reilly to part company.

The final straw apparently was [the lengthy exposé](#) published by the *New York Times* on April 1 that launched the avalanche that had been waiting to engulf and wash away O'Reilly. Emily Steel and Michael Schmidt summarized their report: "[Our] investigation ... has found a total of five women who have received payouts from either Mr. O'Reilly or the company in exchange for [them] agreeing not to pursue litigation or speak about their accusations against him. The agreements totaled about \$13 million."

This revelation came on top of the departure of the network's former chairman, Roger Ailes, who was dismissed last summer in the wake of another sexual harassment scandal involving former Fox News anchor Gretchen Carlson, among others. But this time the revelations were so lurid that more than 60 companies have withdrawn their advertising from O'Reilly's show since the *Times'* article appeared.

The first incident dates back to October 13, 2004 when Andrea Mackris, a former producer for his show, sued O'Reilly for \$60 million, alleging a history of sexual harassment, followed by a countersuit by O'Reilly, claiming extortion. In her suit Mackris claimed that if she went public with her charges, O'Reilly told her that "Roger Ailes ... will go after you ... Ailes operates behind the scenes, strategizes, and makes things that happen so that one BAM! the person gets what's coming to them but never sees it coming." Six days later Mackris expanded her suit for further damages over O'Reilly's retaliatory suit.

On October 28 the two combatants reached an out-of-court settlement, with each agreeing to drop their suits and countersuits, and keeping the details confidential.

That settlement, according to the *Times*, was around \$9 million.

Shortly after Ailes left, former Fox host Juliet Huddy settled a sexual harassment claim against O'Reilly for \$1.6 million. In that instance Huddy claimed that O'Reilly pursued a romantic relationship with her, made lewd remarks in her presence, and made a phone call to her (which she recorded) in which O'Reilly behaved in a manner not appropriate to report here.





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Last August former Fox host Andrea Tantaros filed a sexual harassment charge against Fox News, claiming that O'Reilly made sexually suggestive comments to her. When Fox News offered her \$1 million to go away, she turned it down, and the case remains open. In her lawsuit Tantaros said that early in 2016 O'Reilly had asked her "to come to stay with him on Long Island where it would be 'very private,' and told her "on more than one occasion that he could 'see [her] as a wild girl.'"

As Steel and Schmidt noted, it was all of a pattern: "As an influential figure in the newsroom, Mr. O'Reilly would create a bond with some women by offering advice and promising to help them professionally. He then would pursue sexual relationships with them, causing some to fear that if they rebuffed him, their careers would stall."

Just before leaving for his traditional spring vacation, O'Reilly hired a crisis management professional, Mark Fabiani, to handle the situation that was threatening to engulf him. Fabiani's statement included a remarkable "spin" defending the man who for years called his show "the no spin zone":

Just like other prominent and controversial people, I'm vulnerable to lawsuits from individuals who want me to pay them to avoid negative publicity. In my more than 20 years at Fox News Channel, no one has ever filed a complaint about me with the Human Resources Department, even on an anonymous hotline. But most importantly, I'm a father who cares deeply for my children and who would do anything to avoid hurting them in any way. And so I have put to rest any controversies to spare my children.... The worst part of my job is being a target for those who would harm me and my employer, the Fox News Channel. Those of us in the arena are constantly at risk, as are our families and children. My primary efforts will continue to be to put forth an honest TV program and to protect those close to me.

O'Reilly also had his attorney dust off the hoary charge of political character assassination by his enemies: "[Mr. O'Reilly has] been subjected to a brutal campaign of character assassination that is unprecedented in post-McCarthyist America" and then added that he has "evidence that the smear campaign is being orchestrated by far-left organizations bent on destroying O'Reilly and Fox News for political and financial reasons."

All of which reminds of another past master at "spin," Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, who for years was asked, "Do you take performance enhancing substances?" Armstrong would always answer something on the order of "I've never been caught. The tests were always negative."

Now O'Reilly has been caught. The cost to Fox News will be substantial. His show was drawing four million viewers every night, bringing in advertising revenues in excess of \$150 million a year. Half of those advertisers have pulled their ads, and the decision to be made by Fox News' co-chairs on Thursday is likely to revolve around that.

As noted by [New York magazine](#), "According to sources, Fox News wants the transition to be seamless. Executives are currently debating possible replacement hosts. Names that have been discussed include Eric Bolling, Dana Perino, and Tucker Carlson, who would move from his successful 9 p.m. slot and create a need for a new host at that time. One source said Sean Hannity is happy at 10 p.m. and would not want to move. Network executives are hoping to have the new host in place by Monday."

Some critics of O'Reilly point to his years-long masquerade as some kind of conservative. Missing from Thursday's conversation will be any mention of O'Reilly's prior history of working for the mainstream media outlets CBS (1980 to 1986), or ABC (1986-1995), or advancing his liberal education by enrolling, at age 49, at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University where he received a



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master's degree.

O'Reilly is supposed to return from his vacation on Monday, April 24, but sources at Fox, contacted by reporters, have been unwilling to confirm that. What O'Reilly himself has confirmed is that he is no "conservative," at least by any contemporary understanding of the word. Writing in his book, *The O'Reilly Factor*, that a reader "might be wondering whether I'm conservative, liberal, libertarian, or exactly what.... See, I don't want to fit any of those labels, because I believe that the truth doesn't have labels. When I see corruption, I try to expose it. When I see exploitation, I try to fight it. That's my political position."

As of Monday, all indications appear that his position will be former host of *The O'Reilly Factor*.

*Photo: AP Images*

*An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](http://LightFromTheRight.com), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at [badelman@thenewamerican.com](mailto:badelman@thenewamerican.com).*



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