

Fox News fires Bob Beckel from 'The Five,' claims he made insensitive remark to black employee

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Fox News has fired Bob Beckel, a co-host of its prime-time program “The Five,” saying he made an insensitive remark to a black employee.

Fox News announced the firing in a statement issued Friday that did not disclose what Beckel said to the employee who filed the complaint.

The firing was related to an off-air exchange Beckel had with the employee on Tuesday night, according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss it publicly, and was brought to the attention of Fox News' human resources department.

An investigation was conducted and Beckel was informed of his termination Friday, the company said.

Fox News faces a number of racial discrimination complaints. In March, two black employees filed a racial discrimination suit against the company, alleging that Judy Slater, the controller for the accounting department for 18 years, regularly made racist and inappropriate comments to her black employees. Slater was fired Feb. 28.

The company has also confronted a barrage of complaints over its treatment of women. The 21st Century Fox unit has either settled or litigated a number of sexual harassment cases lodged against its executives, including its ousted chief Roger Ailes, who died Thursday. Star host Bill O'Reilly resigned last month after disclosures of sexual harassment complaints and settlements paid to multiple women.

Before his firing, O'Reilly also came under fire and issued an on-air apology for making racially insensitive comments about Rep. Maxine Waters' (D-Los Angeles) hair.

Beckel, a former Democratic media consultant who was a left-wing voice on “The Five,” had to apologize to viewers in 2014 for using a slur on-air to describe Chinese people during a commentary concerning what he said was the threat posed by China to the national security of the U.S.

Douglas Wigdor, an attorney who is representing the employee who complained about Beckel and others who have alleged racial discrimination at Fox News, said Beckel “stormed out of his office” when an African American information-technology employee came to service his computer, “telling our client that he was leaving his office because he was black.” Wigdor alleged Fox News executives tried to get the employee to withdraw the complaint.

“We intend on holding 21st Century Fox accountable for these actions and will be filing multiple other complaints in other matters next week,” Wigdor said.

“Fox News made the decision to terminate Mr. Beckel after a prompt and thorough investigation,” Fox said in a statement. The network's head of human resources “facilitated an apology from Mr. Beckel to the employee minutes after he was terminated. No one tried to persuade Mr. Wigdor's client to withdraw his complaint.”

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3:15 p.m.: This article was updated with an additional response from Fox News.

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