

Bill O'Reilly is out at Fox News

April 19, 2017 2:01 p.m.

crainsnewyork.com

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Photo: Associated Press

The Fox News host made something of a surprise announcement he was going on vacation in Italy earlier this month.

Fox News is parting ways with Bill O'Reilly, whose 21-year tenure at the network has been derailed by allegations of sexual harassment.

"After a thorough and careful review of the allegations, the Company and Bill O'Reilly have agreed that Bill O'Reilly will not be returning to the Fox News Channel," the company said in a statement Wednesday.

Fresh allegations this week of misconduct by the Fox News host had reduced the likelihood that he'd return to the network, Bloomberg reported Tuesday, citing a person familiar with the matter.

Pressure had been rising on Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox Inc., the parent of the conservative-leaning news network, to make a decision on O'Reilly's fate as advertisers fled his show. O'Reilly, the channel's most popular host, pulls in tens of millions of dollars a year in ad revenue. The network had earlier said O'Reilly, 67, would return to his show April 24 after a previously scheduled vacation.

Fox said that law firm Paul Weiss is investigating the claims. The TV host's lawyer promised to unveil evidence that far-left organizations are behind the rash of sexual-harassment allegations against his client.

The "smear campaign" by the groups has led to a "character assassination" not seen since McCarthyism, attorney Marc E. Kasowitz said in a statement. "Irrefutable" proof to back up his claims is forthcoming, he said.

The New York Times published a report earlier this month that claimed O'Reilly made sexually charged remarks and overtures to at least five female employees whose complaints the network or the TV host settled out of court. The uproar is a distraction at a time when Fox is trying to secure regulatory clearance for its \$14.6 billion acquisition of Sky Plc.

As protesters gathered outside the entrance to Fox News's New York headquarters Tuesday, attorney Lisa Bloom tweeted that she's representing a woman who has new complaints of sexual

and racial harassment by O'Reilly. In a separate statement, Kasowitz called the allegation outrageous. "There is obviously an orchestrated campaign by activists and lawyers to destroy Mr. O'Reilly and enrich themselves through publicity driven donations," he said.

Kasowitz is an experienced trial lawyer who has represented financial firms such as ACA Financial and MBIA. And for the last 15 years, according to his website, he's advised another prominent figure in a wide range of litigation matters: President Donald Trump.

Fox News, which accounts for an estimated quarter of Fox's profit, has stayed on top in cable ratings despite the internal turmoil. The network remains the most-watched on cable year-to-date, and viewership for the *The O'Reilly Factor* improved in the first week of April, according to a Bloomberg Intelligence analysis.

Fox could soon be confronted with new harassment allegations. New York lawyer Douglas Wigdor, who has already brought two harassment lawsuits against Fox, said Wednesday he is planning to file additional cases in coming days.

Wigdor's firm represents two black Fox News payroll employees who have sued the network alleging they were the victims of racial bias, as well as a reporter who alleges that she suffered sexual discrimination and harassment during her time at New York station Fox 5.

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