



PERFORMING ARTS

Trump plans to name himself chair of Kennedy Center, fire board members

FEBRUARY 7, 2025 · 10:36 PM ET



Mandalit del Barco



President Trump announced Friday that he planned to take over as chair of the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Hulton Archive/Getty Images

President Trump says he is taking over leadership of the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. He declared himself chairman of Washington D.C.'s long-celebrated cultural institution on Friday. In doing so, he'll replace billionaire philanthropist David Rubenstein, an ally of former President Joe Biden who was set to chair until 2026.

Posting on [Truth Social](#), Trump wrote he was immediately terminating "multiple individuals" from the center's Board of Trustees "who do not share our vision for a Golden Age in Arts and Culture."

Trump said he would soon announce a new board, "with an amazing Chairman, DONALD J. TRUMP!" He also called out the center's programming.

"Just last year, the Kennedy Center featured Drag Shows specifically targeting our youth — THIS WILL STOP. The Kennedy Center is an American Jewel, and must reflect the brightest STARS on its stage from all across our Nation. For the Kennedy Center, THE BEST IS YET TO COME!"

A representative for Rubenstein, co-founder and co-chairman of private equity giant Carlyle, said he had "no comment" about the news. But a statement from the Kennedy Center said they had received no official communications from the White House regarding changes to the board of trustees, though they were aware that board members received termination notices.



CULTURE

Kennedy Center pays tribute to the Grateful Dead, Bonnie Raitt, Sandoval and The Apollo

"There is nothing in the Center's statute that would prevent a new administration from replacing board members," read the statement. "However, this would be the first time such action has been taken with the Kennedy Center's board."

The statement also referred to the "strong support" the center had received throughout its history "from members of Congress and their staffs—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents." The Center has had "a collaborative relationship with every presidential administration," the statement elaborated, with "a bi-partisan board of trustees that has supported the arts in a non-partisan fashion."

During his first term as president, Trump did not attend the Kennedy Center's annual gala; performing artists protested his administration and threatened to boycott Kennedy Center events at the White House.

It wasn't immediately clear which Kennedy Center board members Trump would oust. During his presidency, Biden appointed several members to the center's board, including former White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and Democratic National Committee finance chair Chris Korge. TV producer Shonda Rhimes is the board's treasurer, and musician [Jon Batiste](#) is also on the board.

According to the [center's website](#), President Dwight D. Eisenhower conceived of an "artistic mecca" in the nation's capital in 1955. Eisenhower signed a law establishing the National Cultural Center, and President Kennedy then led fundraising efforts to build it. In 1964, roughly a year after Kennedy was assassinated, construction began on the cultural center dedicated to presenting classical and contemporary music, opera, dance, and other performing arts.

Over the years, the Center has showcased and honored many performing artists, including Fred Astaire and Marian Anderson, in 1981 to last year's honorees, The Grateful Dead, Frances Ford Coppola, Bonnie Raitt, Arturo Sandoval and the Apollo Theater.

Among those performing at the Kennedy Center this weekend are the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and a staging of the musical *Schmigadoon*.



THE TWO-WAY
President Trump To Skip Kennedy Center Honors, Highlighting Rift With Artists

Correction
Feb. 8, 2025
In a previous story, we incorrectly stated that the Kennedy Center opened in 1964. In fact, groundbreaking ceremonies began that year. The Center made its public debut on September 8, 1971.

kennedy center president trump washington dc national symphony orchestra



READ & LISTEN

- Home
- News
- Culture
- Music
- Podcasts & Shows

CONNECT
[Newsletters](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Press](#)

[Public Editor](#)

[Corrections](#)

[Contact & Help](#)

ABOUT NPR

[Overview](#)

[Diversity](#)

[NPR Network](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Ethics](#)

[Finances](#)

GET INVOLVED

[Support Public Radio](#)

[Sponsor NPR](#)

[NPR Careers](#)

[NPR Shop](#)

[NPR Events](#)

[NPR Extra](#)

[terms of use](#)

[privacy](#)

[your privacy choices](#)

[text only](#)