

Landmark Ruling: Alex Jones Denied Bankruptcy Escape from \$1.1 Billion Sandy Hook Defamation Damages



Alex Jones' Bankruptcy Bid Denied in \$1.1 Billion Sandy Hook Defamation Case

A U.S. bankruptcy judge has rejected conspiracy theorist Alex Jones's attempt to use personal bankruptcy to evade paying over \$1.1 billion in defamation damages related to his repeated false claims regarding the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school massacre.

Bankruptcy Rules: Exceptions for "Willful or Malicious Injury"

While bankruptcy can discharge debts and legal judgments, it cannot be employed to escape those arising from "willful or malicious injury" caused by the debtor. U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Christopher Lopez made this important legal distinction in Houston, Texas.

Defamation Verdicts in Connecticut and Texas

Jones had previously been found to have intentionally defamed the relatives of school children tragically killed in the Sandy Hook mass shooting. Courts in Connecticut and Texas had already ordered Jones to pay an astounding \$1.5 billion in damages.

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Bankruptcy Ruling: \$1.1 Billion Unwipeable

Judge Lopez ruled that a significant portion of these verdicts, totaling more than \$1.1 billion and awarded for defamation and intentional infliction of emotional distress, cannot be discharged through bankruptcy proceedings. However, other portions of the verdicts, including \$324 million designated as attorneys' fees, which were awarded as punitive damages in the Connecticut case, might be potentially eligible for discharge.

The Gray Area of "Willful" and "Malicious" Lies

The ruling raised questions regarding whether the punitive damages, specifically the \$324 million in attorneys' fees, could be attributed to "willful" and "malicious" lies or if they were instead a result of "reckless" conduct. Judge Lopez indicated that a trial would be necessary to determine the precise amount of damages subject to discharge.

Legal Response and Upcoming Trials

Attorneys representing Alex Jones and the Sandy Hook families did not immediately provide a response to the ruling.

Jones's legal team had contended that he had not lied and that his actions were not malicious. They maintained that Jones had always expressed beliefs in the truth of his on-air statements.

Alex Jones' False Claims and Bankruptcy Filing

For years, Jones propagated baseless claims that the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, which claimed

the lives of 20 students and six staff members, was a government-conspired hoax involving actors. While Jones has since acknowledged the tragedy, plaintiffs asserted that he profited for years from these falsehoods.

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Jones and his media company, Free Speech Systems, filed for bankruptcy protection in December and July of the previous year, respectively.

Ongoing Legal Battles for Alex Jones

Apart from the current verdicts, Jones faces the prospect of two additional defamation trials for plaintiffs who have not yet received a final judgment in their respective cases.

In his recent ruling, Judge Lopez determined that Jones could not evade the damages to be awarded in one of these cases since he had already been held liable for defaming Leonard Pozner and Veronique De La Rosa. Jones had falsely claimed that Veronique De La Rosa was an actor who had "faked" a CNN interview regarding her son's tragic death in the Sandy Hook shooting.

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