

With Alex Jones set to answer questions under oath, Sandy Hook families' fight for damages heats up

By Rob Ryser

Four months after eight families who lost loved ones in the Sandy Hook shooting won their defamation case against conspiracy extremist Alex Jones in Connecticut, the fight to determine damages is just beginning.

Motions are flying from both sides in state Superior Court as the families prepare to question Jones under oath for a final time before a jury decides damages in the fall.

The fighting made headlines in January when Superior Court Judge Barbara Bellis granted families permission to subpoena Facebook for records of Jones' 11 deactivated accounts, and in February when the families requested records of Jones' talks with Spotify podcaster Joe Rogan.

Much of the fighting in Bellis' court room centers on the families' requests for information about the business accounts and practices of Jones and his affiliates,

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including a limited liability corporation called Free Speech Systems.

“[I]t is clear that cash coming into Free Speech Systems, LLC’s accounts was routed to third-party entities and then drawn down by Alex Jones. As such, the financial and organizational relationships between those entities is directly related to the various ways in which Alex Jones was able to obtain financial benefits from his mistreatment of the plaintiffs,” the families’ attorneys argued in February.

Jones’ high-profile attorney in Connecticut objected.

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Pattis likened the families’ efforts to a “fishing expedition” and a “collection action.”

“Obviously, the plaintiffs hope for a large judgment. If they obtain it, the time for post-judgment collections will have arrived.” Pattis wrote. “The time will then have come to advance, and to attempt to

prove, that the third parties are what they suggest: alter egos of Mr. Jones’.”

The latest round of fighting comes two weeks before the families’ attorneys are scheduled to interview Jones under oath in preparation for a damages trial that is scheduled for the fall.

A similar process is underway in Texas, where parents who lost children in the Sandy Hook shooting won three other defamation cases against Jones.

In both states, judges first warned Jones then sanctioned Jones and then defaulted Jones for abuses of pretrial procedure. Jones called the shooting of 26 first-graders and educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012 “staged,” “synthetic,” “manufactured,” “a giant hoax,” and “completely fake with actors.”

Jones made national headlines in 2019 when he was questioned under oath in one of the Texas cases and video of his deposition was made public. In part of that deposition, Jones made a connection about his opinions of conspiracies and “a form of psychosis.”

“I basically thought everything was staged ... even though I’m learning a lot of things aren’t staged,” Jones said. ■