



Vince McMahon settles with SEC over hush money agreements as civil assault case continues



Vince McMahon in Las Vegas, on Jan. 8, 2014. Ethan Miller / Getty Images file SHARE THIS —

The former WWE CEO failed to disclose payment agreements he allegedly made with two women in exchange for their silence.

By Rob Wile

The Securities and Exchange Commission said Friday that World Wrestling Entertainment co-founder Vince McMahon will pay more than \$1.7 million in relation to charges that he failed to disclose payment agreements related to sexual assault charges.

Meanwhile, a woman suing McMahon and the WWE said she was pressing on with her civil case related to the allegations.

The SEC said McMahon circumvented WWE internal accounting controls and caused material misstatements in the company's 2018 and 2021 financial statements.

The SEC added that McMahon agreed to the settlement without admitting or denying its findings. He will pay a \$400,000 civil penalty and reimburse WWE approximately \$1,331,000.

"Company executives cannot enter into material agreements on behalf of the company they serve and withhold that information from the company's control functions and auditor," Thomas P. Smith Jr., Associate Regional Director in the New York Regional Office, said in a statement.

McMahon released the following statement Friday:

"The case is closed. Today ends nearly three years of investigation by different governmental agencies. There has been a great deal of speculation about what exactly the government was investigating and what the outcome would be. As today's resolution shows, much of that speculation was misguided and misleading. In the end, there was never anything more to this than minor accounting errors with regard to some personal payments that I made several years ago while I was CEO of WWE. I'm thrilled that I can now put all this behind me."

Last month, U.S. prosecutors indicated they would continue a criminal investigation into McMahon while a civil case being brought by a former WWE employee alleging sexual assault and trafficking went forward.

A DOJ spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

An attorney for Janel Grant, a former WWE employee who filed the civil case, said in a statement that Grant intended to press on with her suit against McMahon, WWE and John Laurinaitis, a former company executive.

"During his time leading WWE, Vince McMahon acted as if rules did not apply to him, and now we have confirmation that he repeatedly broke the law to cover up his horrifying behavior, including human trafficking," said the attorney, Ann Callis.

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"The SEC's charges prove that the NDA Vince McMahon coerced Ms. Grant into signing violates the law, and therefore her case must be heard in court. While prosecutors for the Southern District of New York continue their criminal investigation, we look forward to bringing forward new evidence in our civil case about the sexual exploitation Ms. Grant endured at WWE by Vince McMahon and John Laurinaitis."

The SEC alleges McMahon failed to disclose one \$3 million payment paid to a former WWE employee — and another \$7.5 million paid to a female independent contractor — in exchange for their not filing claims against him.

As a result, the agency said, the WWE overstated its 2018 net income by approximately 8% and its 2021 net income by approximately

1.7%.

The SEC did not name either payment recipient. In 2022, the Wall Street Journal reported McMahon had paid \$3 million to a former WWE employee to quash sexual assault allegations.

Two years later, that employee, Grant, filed explosive sexual assault and trafficking allegations against McMahon and WWE, prompting McMahon to step down as executive chairman of TKO, the WWE's parent company, and relinquished all roles with WWE.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that McMahon has paid as much as \$12 million over 16 years to suppress various allegations of sexual misconduct and infidelity.

The settlement comes as Linda McMahon, Vince McMahon's wife and former WWE CEO, prepares for Senate confirmation hearings to become education secretary in President-elect Donald Trump's second administration.

CORRECTION (Jan. 10, 2025, 12:50 p.m. ET): A previous version of this article misstated the last name of one of the former WWE employees who filed a civil case against Vince McMahon. She is Janel Grant, not Janel Hill.

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