

## Hamley: Owners reach agreement on sale of businesses

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hearing the afternoon of Aug. 7 at the bankruptcy court in Portland. That's a hearing for Woodfield and other parties to explain to the judge why the court should approve their plan.

Neither Woodfield nor Pearce returned calls seeking comment.

After the sale closes, Woodfield and Pearce have to work with the Hamley bookkeeper to calculate and pay all company debts, and bankruptcy Judge Peter McKittrick or a third-party

arbitrator gets to settle any disputes that arise during that process.

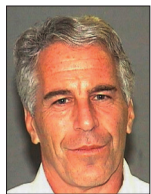
Until then, according to the deal, the management of the Hamley companies remains status quo, with Woodfield overseeing the steak house and Pearce in charge of the western store.

The two former business partners also consented to the winning bidder appointing new managers of the Hamley businesses. And Woodfield agreed Pearce "may remain involved in some capacity" in Hamley operations after the sale.

## Wealthy financier charged with molesting dozens of girls

By MICHAEL R. SISAK AND JIM MUSTIAN  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — In a startling reversal of fortune, billionaire financier Jeffrey Epstein was charged Monday with sexually abusing dozens of underage girls in a case brought more than a decade after he secretly cut a deal with federal prosecutors to dispose of nearly identical allegations.



Epstein

The 66-year-old hedge fund manager who once socialized with some of the world's most powerful people was charged in a newly unsealed federal indictment with sex trafficking and conspiracy during the early 2000s. He could get up to 45 years in prison if convicted.

The case sets the stage for another #MeToo-era trial fraught with questions of wealth and influence. Epstein's powerful friends over the years have included President Donald Trump, former President Bill Clinton and Britain's Prince Andrew.

Prosecutors said the evidence against Epstein included a "vast trove" of hundreds or even thousands of lewd photographs of young women or girls, discovered in a weekend search of his New York City mansion. Authorities also found papers and phone records corroborating the alleged crimes, and a massage room still set up the way accusers said it appeared, prosecutors said.

Epstein, who was arrested Saturday as he arrived in the U.S. from Paris aboard his private jet, was brought into court Monday in a blue jail uniform, his hair disheveled, and pleaded not guilty. He was jailed for a bail hearing next Monday, when prosecutors plan to argue that the rich world traveler might

flee if released.

His lawyers argued that the sex-crime allegations had been settled in 2008 with a plea agreement in Florida that was overseen by Alexander Acosta, who was the U.S. attorney in Miami at the time and is now Trump's labor secretary.

"This is ancient stuff," Epstein attorney Reid Weingarten said in court, calling the case essentially a "redo" by the government.

But U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman of New York said that the non-prosecution agreement that spared Epstein from a heavy prison sentence a decade ago is binding only on federal prosecutors in Florida, not on authorities in New York.

The alleged victims "deserve their day in court," Berman said. "We are proud to be standing up for them by bringing this indictment."

Epstein was accused in the indictment of paying underage girls hundreds of dollars in cash for massages and then molesting them at his homes in Palm Beach, Florida, and New York from 2002 through 2005.

He "intentionally sought out minors and knew that many of his victims were in fact under the age of 18," prosecutors said. He also paid some of his victims to recruit additional girls, creating "a vast network of underage victims for him to sexually exploit," prosecutors said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Alex Rossmiller said that while there is some overlap between the Florida and New York cases, one of the counts is based entirely on New York victims.

Federal authorities said new accusers have come forward since Epstein's arrest, and they urged other possible victims to contact the FBI.

## Townhall: Merkley fields questions in Boardman

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while they waited for their hearing. The program had a near 100% success rate in getting families to show up to court, but was canceled by the Trump administration for reasons Merkley said he hasn't been able to determine.

He said the federal government needed to provide the resources to get people of all ages seeking asylum through the hearing process much more quickly. The vast majority of people who seek asylum are turned away, he said — only about 20,000 people were granted asylum last year.

"Regardless of whether they win or lose we should still treat them with dignity in between," he said.

He also said the country needed to stop turning away unaccompanied minors at the border, leaving them at the mercy of sex traffickers and other bad actors.

Others at Saturday's town hall were concerned about children who are struggling in America's education system.

Maureen McGrath, director of Umatilla Morrow Head Start, asked about federal initiatives on the horizon for early childhood education. Rick and Susan Scheibner, who both work for Hermiston School District, described children coming to school with more mental health problems and more trauma than a decade ago. Susan said she saw economically stressed parents making tough choices, and the effect on their children.

Merkley said the federal government needed to



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Senator Jeff Merkley speaks during a town hall at the SAGE Center in Boardman. Merkley used the time to address community concerns regarding Social Security, refugees and education.

directly invest in education but also help families by cutting wasteful spending and focusing on basics such as health care and housing.

He said when he was growing up his family purchased a home worth the equivalent of two years of his father's salary as a mechanic. Today the same type of home in the same town costs five to six times a mechanic's annual salary, he said.

"It isn't that the families in my neighborhood changed, it's that the economics have changed," he said.

Merkley also said he was a proponent of a combined effort of state and federal spending to serve more children with early childhood education programs like Head Start. He said research showed that investments

in a child's formative years paid off many times over when they became a more productive member of society and avoided trouble like incarceration.

Attendees at Saturday's town hall also asked about keeping Social Security solvent, taking away subsidies for fossil fuels, preventing foreign interference in elections, slowing climate change and holding powerful tech companies like Facebook accountable.

Merkley said if the government removed the cap on the level of wages subject to the Social Security tax or placed a Social Security tax on capital gains the program would be solvent for many decades into the future with money for increased benefits. He expressed sup-

port for incentivizing clean energy and energy-efficiency upgrades to homes and agreed with the citizen who advocated removing the subsidies for oil and gas companies.

Merkley said he supports passage of the bipartisan DETER Act, which lays out stiff sanctions for any foreign country found meddling in the United States' elections. Beyond foreign interference, he feels Congress has a duty to tackle problems he believes are eroding the country's democracy.

"We're seeing a lot of gerrymandering, a lot of voter suppression and intimidation and a lot of dark money in campaigns," he said. "It's got to be a real priority to take those on."

## Big earthquakes raise interest in West Coast warning system

By JOHN ANTCAZAK AND CHRISTOPHER WEBER  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The powerful Mojave Desert earthquakes that rocked California ended a years-long lull in major seismic activity and raised new interest in an early warning system being developed for the West Coast.

The ShakeAlert system is substantially built in California and overall is about 55% complete, with much of the remaining installation of seismic sensor stations to be done in the Pacific Northwest, said Robert de Groot of the U.S. Geological Survey.

Areas that have the appropriate number of sensors include Southern California, San Francisco Bay Area and the Seattle-Tacoma region, de Groot said.

The system does not predict earthquakes. Rather, it detects that an earthquake is occurring, rapidly calculates expected intensity levels and sends out alerts that may give warnings ranging

from several seconds to perhaps a minute before potentially damaging shaking hits locations away from the epicenter.

Depending on the distance, that could be enough time to automatically slow trains, stop industrial machines, start generators, pull a surgical knife away from a patient or tell students to put the "drop, cover and hold" drill into action.

For alerts to be useful, delivery has to be timely, and that's a problem with current cellphone technology. For cellphone delivery, the USGS ultimately intends to use the same system that delivers Amber Alerts, sending signals to everyone in reach of cellphone towers in defined areas where damaging shaking is expected.

Pilot programs involving select users have been underway for several years. In October, the USGS announced the system was ready to be used broadly by businesses, utilities, schools and other entities following a software update that reduced problems such as false alerts



AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Members of the National Guard load water onto an SUV in the aftermath of an earthquake on Sunday outside Trona High School in Trona, Calif.

typically caused by a big quake somewhere in the world being misidentified as a local quake.

Currently, the only mass public notification is possible through a mobile app developed for the city of Los Angeles and functional only within Los Angeles County.

The ShakeAlertLA app did not send alerts for last week's two big quakes, but officials said it functioned as designed because the expected level of shaking in the LA area — more than 100 miles from the epicenters — was below a trigger threshold.

Thresholds for alerting are important because California has daily earthquakes. "Imagine getting 10 ShakeAlerts on your phone

for really small earthquakes that may not affect you," de Groot said. "If people get saturated with these messages it's going to make people not care as much."

In the Mojave Desert on Monday, rattled residents cleaned up and officials assessed damage in the aftermath of Thursday's magnitude 6.4 earthquake and Friday's magnitude 7.1 quake centered near Ridgecrest.

President Donald Trump on Monday declared an emergency exists in California because of the quakes, paving the way for federal aid. The declaration authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster relief efforts.

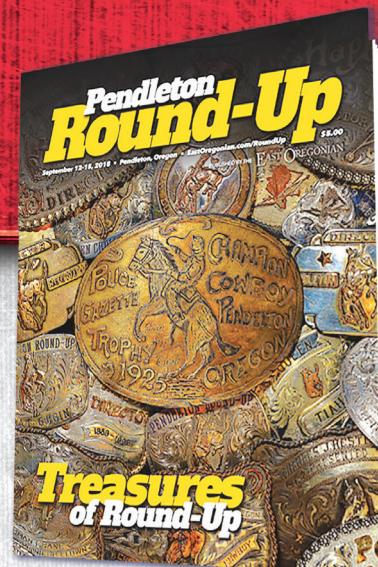
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