

METRO

Charity in hot water over Epstein connection

By Josh Kosman

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REUTERS

Leon Black's efforts to distance his family charity from convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein could draw scrutiny from regulators, experts say.

Last week, reps for Black, the billionaire chairman of the Museum of Modern Art, **said his charitable foundation had dropped Epstein as a director** months before the politically connected perv's 2008 conviction for soliciting prostitution from a 14-year-old girl — despite foundation records showing otherwise.

The Post reported last week that tax documents for the Black Family Foundation named Epstein as a director for another five years, through the end of 2012. A day after The Post's report, however, reps for Black insisted that Epstein's name had lingered on the documents solely because of clerical errors by the charity's accountant.

Those records include tax filings submitted to the IRS between 2008 and 2012 as well as tax forms submitted to the New York Attorney General's office over the same time period.

Black, co-founder of buyout firm Apollo Global Management, and his wife, Debra, certified the latter tax documents "under penalty of perjury" with their signatures, records show.

Black didn't respond to requests for comment about how the error escaped him and his wife for so many years. The AG's office declined to comment.

Experts say the foundation's acknowledgment of multiyear tax form errors is abnormal and could draw the attention of the NY AG because they suggest something bigger might be amiss.

"This is something the New York Attorney General's Charities Bureau could certainly look into," agreed Avi Kestenbaum, co-chair of law firm Meltzer Lippe's trusts and estates practice. "You can't sign a return without looking at it. One would think Black would have noticed that Epstein was still listed."

"The oversight excuse may work for a year, but it is hard to support over multiple years," said a former prosecutor with the NY AG's office, who asked not to be named. "There is a breakdown somewhere in the process."

"What would interest the AG is 'Were they filing false documents and what was the motive? What's true and what's false?' "

SEE ALSO

Questions around Black's ties to Epstein have resurfaced after Manhattan federal prosecutors earlier this month charged Epstein with sex trafficking dozens of minors between 2002 and 2005 in New York and Florida, where he has homes.

After The Post revealed that Epstein was listed as a director on Black Family Foundation documents following his first conviction in 2008, the New York Times reported that Black's four children in 2011 teamed up with Epstein to buy the company Environmental Solutions Worldwide.

Billionaire kept Jeffrey Epstein as charity director after plea deal

In 2015, Black threw a lavish pool party at his Hamptons estate. A source who attended told The Post he was shocked when he noticed that Epstein was among the guests, which also included a number of women in bathing suits.

A source close to MoMA said the Midtown Manhattan museum could also start examining Black's connections to Epstein in light of the fed's allegations.

"That board does not like messes," the source said of the potential backlash that Black could face.

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