



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 26, 2010

## Tom DeLay Convicted of Money Laundering

Former House of Representatives Majority Leader Tom DeLay was convicted on November 24 of money-laundering charges in a state trial five years after his indictment, which forced DeLay's resignation years ago.

The jury took nearly 20 hours to deliberate its verdict, but ultimately concluded that DeLay was guilty of conspiracy to circumvent a state law against corporate contributions to political campaigns in 2002, along with two of his associates. He was convicted of both conspiracy to launder and money laundering.



DeLay was originally charged with breaking campaign finance laws, but prosecutors later pursued money laundering charges as they discovered it would be relatively difficult to prove conspiracy to break campaign finance laws.

During election season in 2002, DeLay's Texans for a Republican Majority made a financial contribution of \$190,000, which was donated by various corporate lobbyists, to the Republican National Committee. The check was delivered by DeLay political advisor Jim Ellis to the Republican National Committee on September 13, when Ellis gave Republican director Terry Nelson a list of state candidates and an amount to be distributed to each candidate. Nelson later testified that the list came from DeLay.

A month later, donations were sent to seven Republican candidates in Texas from a separate account. Six of the seven Republicans won, allowing Republicans to gain control of the legislature for the first time in modern history. In 2003, the legislature played a monumental role in the redistricting of Texas that allowed more Texas Republicans to win Congress in 2004.

While the facts of the case were undisputed, jurors were asked to determine whether evidence existed that proved DeLay knew about the decision to swap the money, and whether the corporate contributions were illegal. The jury, consisting of one Republican, six Democrats, two independents, and three independent liberals, believed he did and they were.

DeLay faces anywhere from 5 to 99 years in prison, though the judge may call for probation. His sentencing is set for December 20.

According to the *New York Times*, DeLay was stoic as he heard his verdict.

As the verdict was read, Mr. DeLay, 63, sat stone-faced at the defense table. Then he rose, turned, smiled, and hugged his wife and then his weeping daughter in the first row of spectators.

DeLay did indicate that he would appeal the decision, claiming that the prosecution was a "political vendetta by Democrats," and was an act of vengeance for his successful orchestration in the 2003 redrawing of congressional districts to elect more Republicans.

"This is an abuse of power. It's a miscarriage of justice ... The criminalization of politics undermines our



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very system,” remarked DeLay.

Democrat Rosemary Lehmberg asserts that the decision to pursue charges was apolitical. “This was about holding public officials accountable, that no one is above the law.”

She added, “This case is a message from the people of the State of Texas that they want — and expect — honesty and ethics in their public officials.”

The trial lasted three weeks, while 30 witnesses were questioned on DeLay’s role in the money laundering allegations. The prosecution produced a variety of evidence ranging from emails to calendars, telephone records, and other documents.

The prosecutor, Gary Cobb, admitted that there was little evidence proving DeLay’s direct control over the decision. “It was almost entirely circumstantial, and there were a lot of people with motives not to have Tom DeLay convicted.”

The leading defense attorney, Dick DeGuerin, argued that the money exchange was legal because the RNC acts as a boundary between corporate and individual contributions.

“It’s not the same money,” was DeGuerin’s insistence throughout the trial.

Of the trial’s conclusion, the *New York Times* writes:

The verdict ends the latest chapter in a long legal battle that forced Mr. DeLay to step down. The trial also opened a window on the world of campaign financing, as jurors heard testimony about large contributions flowing to Mr. DeLay from corporations seeking to influence him, and about junkets to luxury resorts where the congressman would rub shoulder with lobbyists in return for donations.

After the November 24 verdict, DeLay told reporters, “I still maintain that I am innocent ... I’m very disappointed.”

[CNN](#) indicates that DeLay, who accumulated \$8 million in legal fees, had predicted at the start of the trial that the jury would clear him.

*Photo of Tom DeLay: AP Images*



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