

<https://nyti.ms/LUBDuB>

POLITICS

No New Trial for John Edwards

By **KIM SEVERSON** JUNE 13, 2012

The federal campaign-corruption case against former Senator John Edwards is over.

The Justice Department said Wednesday it would not retry Mr. Edwards on the five charges of campaign finance fraud on which a North Carolina jury could not reach a verdict after a six-week trial that ended this month. The jury acquitted him on a sixth.

Although ostensibly a legal case concerned with how a candidate can use money from political supporters, the trial became a spectacle of personal details that cost both sides millions in legal fees.

The trial mined deeply personal details of Mr. Edwards's affair with Rielle Hunter, a videographer whom he hired to help with his presidential campaign after meeting her in a New York bar. Ms. Hunter became pregnant with their child, and the couple's efforts to hide the relationship from the public and from Mr. Edwards's wife, Elizabeth, were at the heart of the government's case.

Two wealthy friends offered more than \$1 million to pay for those efforts, and the government accused Mr. Edwards of fraud, arguing that the money was used to influence voters in his bid for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination.

"We knew that this case — like all campaign finance cases — would be challenging," Lanny A. Breuer, an assistant attorney general, said in a statement. "But it is our duty to bring hard cases when we believe that the facts and the law support charging a candidate for high office with a crime."

The government “put forward its best case against Mr. Edwards,” Mr. Breuer said, but the jurors made their decision. “We respect their judgment,” he said.

Witnesses had been keeping quiet until they found out whether they would have to testify again. Wendy Button, a former speechwriter for Mr. Edwards whose reams of notes were central to the prosecution’s case, said it was discouraging that the trial had changed nothing.

“I hope that future political staffers will learn from this case and John’s failings so that they can make other choices and something like this never happens again,” she said.

Mr. Edwards, who has maintained his innocence since he was indicted in October, has since elaborated, saying he was a sinner but not a criminal.

His lawyers said Wednesday afternoon in a statement, “We are very glad that, after living under this cloud for over three years, John and his family can have their lives back and enjoy the peace they deserve.”

Mr. Edwards’s daughter Cate was more succinct in a message posted on Twitter: “Big sigh of relief. Ready to move forward with life.”

Still, loose ends remain, not the least of which is whether the case will prompt a harder look at the complex world of campaign finance. Over the weeks of testimony in Judge Catherine C. Eagles’s courtroom, there were only a handful of days when the rules governing how candidates spend money were examined. In interviews afterward, jurors said the government had not proved that any laws were broken.

A North Carolina district attorney is still investigating whether Andrew Young, the government’s lead witness, and his lawyers were in contempt for giving federal investigators sealed documents from an earlier civil trial brought by Ms. Hunter. She was seeking the return of personal possessions, including a sex tape she made with Mr. Edwards, a copy of which Mr. Young and his wife took after Ms. Hunter left it behind in a rental house. Mr. Young, a former Edwards aide, had claimed paternity of the baby and went underground to help hide Ms. Hunter.

As for Ms. Hunter, who lives in Charlotte, N.C., with the couple’s 4-year-old

daughter, she will make the rounds of national media next week to promote her new book, “What Really Happened: John Edwards, Our Daughter, and Me.”

John Schwartz contributed reporting.

A version of this article appears in print on June 14, 2012, on Page A18 of the New York edition with the headline: Justice Dept. Will Not Retry Edwards in Corruption Case.

© 2018 The New York Times Company