

Tom Melsheimer Discusses Successful Retrial for Client Ruel Hamilton with *Texas Lawyer*

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Winston & Strawn partner Tom Melsheimer spoke with *Texas Lawyer* to discuss the retrial of and subsequent win on behalf of client Ruel Hamilton. Hamilton was convicted in a 2021 trial of bribing two city council members and sentenced to eight years in prison, but the Fifth Circuit overturned the verdict and allowed Hamilton to remain free pending an appeal. After six days of testimony in the retrial, a federal jury deliberated for two days before returning a not-guilty verdict.

“It’s been a real roller coaster for him ever since he was indicted in 2019, so it’s really been a six-year ordeal that ended with a lot of jubilation and tears in the courtroom yesterday at about 4 p.m.,” Tom said.

In the first trial, prosecutors alleged that Hamilton had bribed two Dallas Council members, Carolyn Davis and Dwaine Caraway, over a housing project and through campaign contributions. The defense contended that he paid the council members for consulting fees and to provide medical assistance for Caraway’s sick mother and medical bills. Tom noted that in the retrial, the government presented the same case with the same witnesses, but the defense focused on factual distinctions and “put the government’s investigation on trial,” arguing the government left out details and alternative explanations.

“Most trials are won before the trial starts to some extent by the preparation, and so we spent a lot of time coming up with new defenses, new approaches,” he said.

Tom stated that in this trial, Caraway testified that the payments were legitimate and not conditioned on him doing anything and believed that the payments from Hamilton were for the exact reasons he asked for them. Additionally, former city manager A.C. Gonzalez testified for the defense in this trial, contradicting a key government witness.

“If I had to take two things, I would say Caraway’s testimony and A.C. Gonzalez testifying the way he did for the defense were two of the most significant changes and the two most significant reasons why the result was different,” Tom said.

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