

Lawmaker cleared on felony charges, found guilty of misdemeanor solicitation



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REYNOLDS



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charged last year.

He was one of eight Houston area attorneys accused of conspiring with Valdez, a habitual felon who ran two medical centers in Houston, but lived in Conroe, where prosecutors allege Valdez had a home office that stored multiple records implicating Reynolds.

A felony conviction would have forced Reynolds to resign from the legislature and lose his license to practice law, his defense attorney Stephen Jackson said.

Reynolds' civil attorneys will deal with his state bar issues.

Barratry is defined by Texas law as a person such as "an attorney, chiropractor, physician, surgeon or private investigator licensed to practice in this state or any person licensed, certified or registered by a healthcare regulatory agency of this state who, with the intent to obtain professional employment for the person or for another, provides or knowingly permits to be provided to an individual who has not sought the person's employment, legal representation, advice or care a written communication or a solicitation."

The law specifically speaks to soliciting employment for personal injury, wrongful death, accidents or disasters.

Posted: Friday, November 7, 2014 9:57 pm | Updated: 10:01 pm, Fri Nov 7, 2014.

By Brandon K. Scott

A Montgomery County jury found Rep. Ron Reynolds, D-Missouri City, guilty of misdemeanor solicitation of professional employment for illegally obtaining clients as a personal injury claims attorney.

Reynolds was convicted Friday of a lesser unlawful solicitation charge and dismissed of the six counts of felony barratry, for which he faced trial this past week in the 221st state District Court.

Defense attorneys for Reynolds, who was re-elected to the House District 27 seat Tuesday on the second day of this trial, contend that he never knowingly accepted clients illegally.

They argued that Reynolds was only part of an illegal operation run solely by Robert Valdez Sr., who had a network of attorneys, medical clinics and body shops he referred clients to in exchange for money.

Valdez, who is serving a five-year sentence on related barratry charges, testified for the jury earlier in the week and testimony from clients spelled out there was a business relationship between Reynolds and Valdez.

Yet defense attorneys in cross examinations always presented the possibility that Valdez illegally solicited clients without Reynolds' knowledge, and that sometimes Valdez provided legal referrals.

Reynolds has claimed his innocence since he was

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"I have tried over 200 jury trials in my career and represented probably over 12,000 clients and I've never seen a barratry case in my career," Jackson said. "So that's how rare it is. And I think the statute is very confusing and difficult for people to understand. I think the jury saw through it, that he did not commit the offense of barratry. He didn't know these cases were illegally solicited."

The sentencing phase of the trial will resume Monday at 9 a.m. Reynolds could face up to a year in jail and a \$4,000 fine. He is also eligible for probation.

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It will be interesting to see how the sentencing goes in this case and whether it will affect his election.

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