

Judge in U.S. Senator Bob Menendez Trial Denies Motion to Acquit



Newark, October 17 (RHC)-- A federal judge in the U.S. city of Newark has denied Senator Bob Menendez's attempt to toss out the Justice Department's bribery case against him. The trial, now in its seventh week, will turn to the defense case as lawyers for the New Jersey Democrat and Dr. Salomon Melgen, a wealthy ophthalmologist from Florida, try to convince jurors that prosecutors have wrongly twisted a longtime friendship into an illegal bribery scheme.

The heart of the Justice Department's case rests on accusations that Menendez accepted political contributions, free rides on private jets and a swanky hotel suite in Paris from Melgen in exchange for agreeing to pressure other high-level federal officials in the executive branch to help resolve his wealthy friend's business problems -- "official acts" prosecutors claim put Menendez on the hook under federal bribery law.

Judge William Walls continued to hear arguments from lawyers Monday morning about whether he should throw out the charges against the two men in light of a 2016 Supreme Court decision unanimously overturning former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell's bribery conviction. The defense team urged Walls that the prosecution's overarching "stream of benefits" theory -- where many gifts are exchanged for a variety

of political favors over a period of several years -- cannot survive post-McDonnell. Lawyers for the defense argued that the prosecution had to show a more direct link between a specific gift followed by a specific political favor.

Walls was unpersuaded, however, finding "a rational jury could conclude the defendants entered into a quid pro quo agreement." Appearing to read from a lengthy written opinion he drafted ahead of time, the judge ultimately concluded: "McDonnell is not antagonistic to the stream of benefits theory."

"We are living in a real world of reality and common sense," Walls said. "The jury will decide whose version of what happened or didn't happen is more likely than not."

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