

The Edwards case: Adultery may be a sin but it's not a crime

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John Edwards, second from left, speaks outside a federal courthouse as his daughter Cate Edwards, left, and parents Wallace Edwards, second from right, and Bobbie Edwards, right, look on after the jury's verdict. (AP Photo/Chuck Burton)

Legal analysts told Capitol Hill Blue before the trial against **John Edwards** began in North Carolina last month the case against the former Senator and Presidential candidate was doomed.

While they agreed that Edwards' actions of screwing around on his wife and spending contributions to keep his pregnant mistress under wraps was despicable at best, it wasn't illegal and the **Justice Department** — which has a lousy record when it comes to prosecuting complex cases — couldn't convince a jury to convict.

After nine days of deliberations, the jury proved the predictions correct. They acquitted Edwards of one count and deadlocked on the others, leading to a **mistrial**.

Even Meanie Sloan, executive director of Citizens for Responsibility & Ethics in Washington, said all the feds could do was “offer up salacious details to prove that Edwards is, indeed, despicable but were not enough to persuade the jury to convict him.”

So what did the government accomplish?

Nothing in the cause of justice. The Justice Department spent millions trying to build a hopeless case against a man who cheated on his wife and tried to hide the affair.

The feds couldn't prove that those who gave the money used for payments to Edwards' paramour intended the funds to be used for campaign purposes. They couldn't prove Edwards knew of or approved the arrangement. They couldn't even agree on what law — if any — was broken.

All they showed was that Edwards was an immoral man and if immorality could land politicians in jail, the halls of Congress, most state legislatures and a lot of city council chambers would be empty and we would have to build a lot more jails.

Said Edwards after the bungled trial:

I want to make sure everyone hears from me. While I do not believe I did anything illegal, or ever thought that I was doing anything illegal, I did an awful, awful lot that was wrong.

There is no one else responsible for my sins. I am responsible—none of the people who came to court and testified are responsible, nobody working for the government is responsible. I am responsible. It is me and me alone.

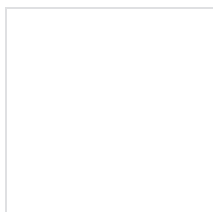
That pretty well wraps it up. Adultery may be a sin in religious circles but is not a crime in legal ones.

Hell, for many elected officials it's a way of life.

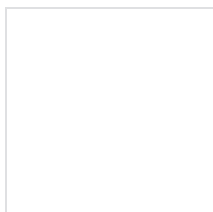
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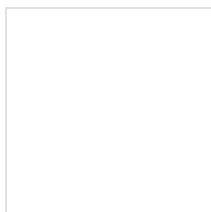
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