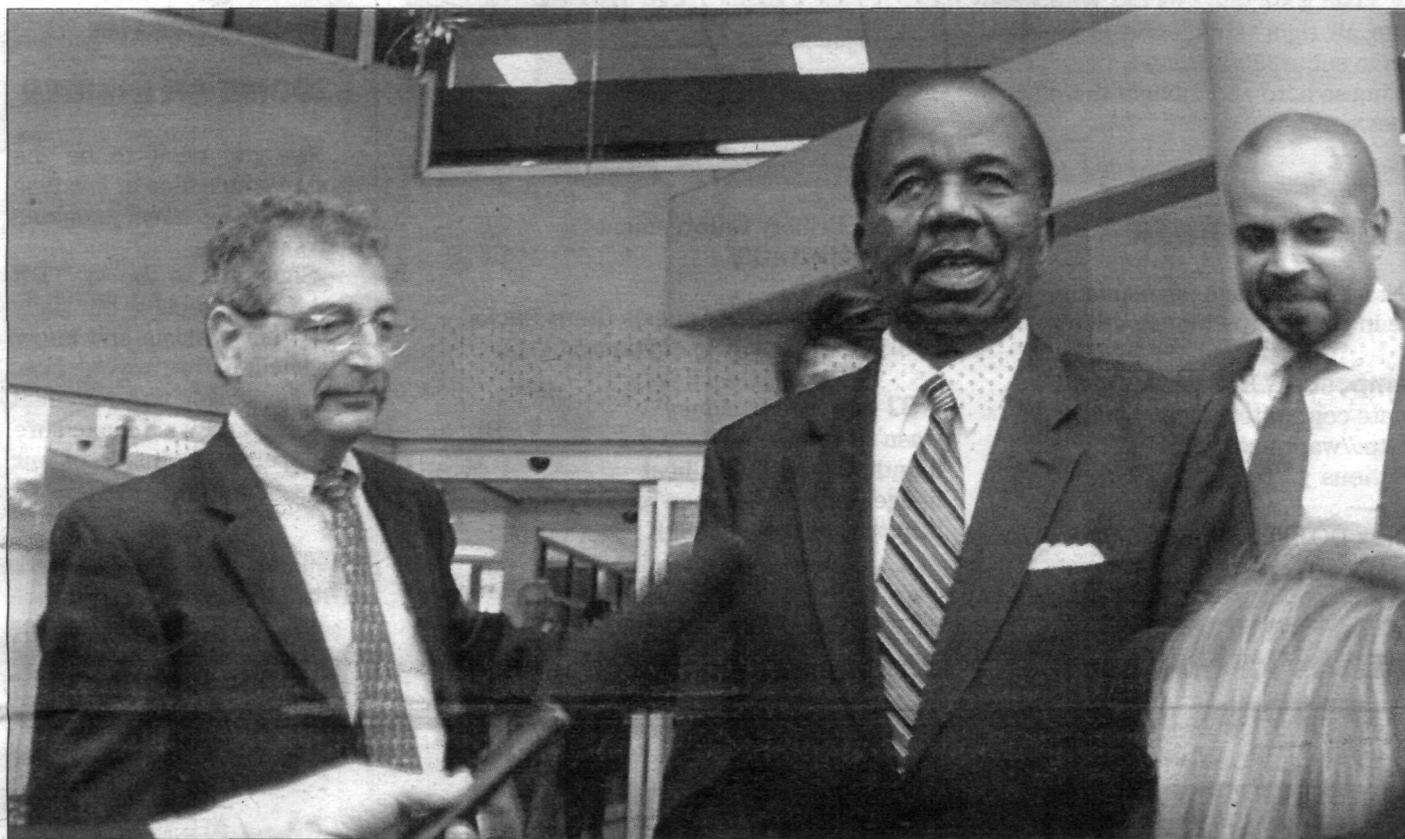


Currie acquitted on all counts



MAXIMILIAN FRANZ

Sen. Ulysses S. Currie is flanked by his attorneys, Joseph L. Evans and Lucius T. Outlaw III, after Tuesday's verdict.

Jury returns defense verdict for senator, Shoppers executives

BY ANDY MARSO

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State Sen. Ulysses S. Currie remained calm and poised Tuesday in the hall outside the federal courtroom where a jury had just acquitted him of all charges in a corruption scandal. He thanked his legal team, called the verdict a win for the **General Assembly** and his constituents and said he was headed to visit his ailing sister.

Then Currie and his supporters got on the elevator and their wild cheering could be heard from behind the thick metal doors.

It was a raucous release of the tension that built up over the six-week trial in **U.S. District Court** in Baltimore. Currie and his co-defendants, former **Shoppers Food Warehouse Corp.** executives William J. White and R. Kevin Small, were charged in a 10-count indictment that alleged that between December 2002 and March 2008, Currie used his office to assist Shoppers in return for \$245,816 in payments.

All three were found not guilty on all counts Tuesday.

"For me, for my wife, for my constituents, for the legislature... for the people of Baltimore City who stopped me on street corners to wish me good luck, it was a great outcome," Currie said outside the courtroom. "I have tremendous support."

The prosecutors in the case left the courtroom without any comment.

Currie >> Senator's legal team denies using 'dummy defense' to win acquittal

Continued from 1A

On the street outside the courthouse, in front of a throng of TV cameras, Currie called it "the greatest day of my life" but declined to answer questions about how the scandal might affect his standing in Annapolis.

Currie, who represents Prince George's County, was elected to a fifth Senate term last year, despite the looming federal trial. But he stepped down as chairman of the powerful Budget and Taxation Committee.

During trial, federal prosecutors claimed that Currie helped Shoppers

obtain state assistance in rent payments for the **Mondawmin Mall** location, beer and wine licenses and favors from the state highway authority.

Currie's legal team countered that he merely worked as a consultant for Shoppers when the legislature was not in session and never exploited his legislative power. Several prominent lawmakers lined up to support that argument and the jury ultimately agreed.

"Each of these three men were demonstrated to be men of impeccable character," said Joseph L. Evans of the Federal Public Defender's Office. "[But] it's fair to say the jury probably took a hardnosed look at the [physical] evidence in addition to the character evidence. The [physical] evidence just wasn't there."

Defense witnesses portrayed Currie as a nice man and an astute politician, though not a particularly bright one. His lawyers also argued

that health problems compromised his mental abilities when he gave statements to the FBI in 2008 and that he has been plagued by poor bookkeeping throughout his 25-year career in the state legislature.

But Evans bristled at the suggestion that his team used the "dummy defense."

"It wasn't a dummy defense," he said. "We didn't use that as our defense and we resent the suggestion by some members of the media that that's what we did."

Evans said the case never should have been brought to court and that any concerns about a conflict of interest between Currie and Shoppers were best handled by the **General Assembly**.

"I think it's a just verdict for all three men," he said. "I really, honestly believe all three are innocent of these charges. ... It validates my faith in our justice system."