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D.C. couple acquitted of misusing health-premium contributions at Hagerstown Hotel

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After four days of testimony, a Washington County Circuit Court judge last week acquitted a Washington, D.C., couple accused of misusing employee health-premium contributions two years ago while working at the Hagerstown Hotel and Conference Center.

Yasaman Rowhani and Hassan Mohammadi were indicted in 2011 on one count each of theft scheme of more than \$500 and conspiracy to commit theft of more than \$500.

The indictments alleged the misuse of approximately \$18,000 in employee contributions between January and June 2009 that were to have paid the health care premiums of the employees at the hotel and conference center on Dual Highway, according to an Aug. 4, 2011, news release from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration.

The jury trial began Monday, with the prosecution concluding its case Thursday.

Defense attorneys Douglas R. Sparks and Bernard W. Semler II then introduced the motion for a judgment of acquittal.

Washington County Circuit Judge Daniel P. Dwyer granted it, saying he did not find evidence of criminal intent to commit theft and, because there was no intent to commit theft, there was no conspiracy.

Although the case began as a federal investigation, Mohammadi and Rowhani were indicted by a state grand jury and prosecuted by the Washington County State's Attorney's Office.

In his opening statement on Monday, Deputy State's Attorney Joseph Michael described the case as one of theft by deception.