

Whittemore going to prison for 2 years

By Scott Sonner, AP

RENO – Ex-Nevada power broker Harvey Whittemore has been sentenced to two years in prison for funneling more than \$130,000 in illegal campaign funds to Sen. Harry Reid's re-election committee in 2007.

U.S. District Court Judge Larry Hicks also ordered Whittemore on Monday to pay \$100,000 in fines for his three felony convictions.

Prosecutors said Whittemore gave money to family members and employees in 2007 to make contributions he had promised to Reid while concealing himself as the true source to skirt campaign finance laws.

Reid has not been accused of any wrongdoing. He has said he was unaware of any potential problems with the money he received.

Prosecutors wanted the judge to send Whittemore to prison for more than four years, while Whittemore's lawyers argued he should be spared prison time based partly on his history of extraordinary charitable giving.

Whittemore took the stand on his own behalf for the first time for about a half hour Monday. Whittemore said he was appearing in utter shame, humiliation and disgrace to ask the judge to consider a lesser sentence.

Whittemore was convicted in May on three felony counts related to his use of conduit, or "straw" donors, to take money he gave them and in turn write checks totaling more than \$133,000 to Reid's 2007 re-election campaign. The jury deadlocked on a

fourth charge of lying to the FBI.

Prosecutors described Whittemore as a greedy, power-hungry, unrepentant crook who deserves to go to prison. They said his "well-conceived and well-executed scheme" was intended to skirt federal election laws by hiding the true source of the money.

His "motivation to do so was not borne from political ideology, hero worship or naivete. Rather it was a knowing and cynical act, conceived in greed, arrogance and the lust for power," Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Myhre said in court briefs last week.

"He knew what he was doing was wrong but did it anyway," he said.

Whittemore's lawyers had argued Nevadans would be better served if the 61-year-old businessman was sentenced to probation and community service so he can make up for his mistakes by continuing his philanthropy.

"Confinement would only serve to strip him of that productivity and arguably divest northern Nevada of one of its most active community leaders," defense lawyer Dominic Gentile wrote in his latest court filing on Friday.