

## State Supreme Court Hears Appeal For Morton Woman's False Insurance Claim Conviction

Still Appealing: Couple Accused of Falsely Reporting That Belongings Were Damaged by Rain During Move

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**By Stephanie Schendel**

The highest state court heard arguments this week for the appeal of a 2010 conviction of a Morton woman found guilty of insurance fraud.

Prosecutors filed charges against Jennifer Mau and David Eden on March 17, 2010, when Republic Western Insurance contacted the Lewis County Prosecutor's Office after denying the couple's claim for a \$16,789 loss.

The couple claimed that rain entered the leaky U-Haul truck they had rented when they moved from Centralia to Morton in 2007 and damaged new merchandise from Best Buy as well as furniture, according to court documents. The couple said they took the damage items to the dump and disposed of them.

An investigator from the insurance company looked into their claim, and discovered there had been no rain on the day the damage reportedly occurred, according to court documents. Investigators also were unable to find a leak in the truck. Eventually, the investigator contacted the county prosecutors, who filed insurance fraud charges against the pair.

The case went to trial, and a jury found them guilty.

Last summer, a state appeals court upheld the convictions of both Eden and Mau. Both argued on the appeal there was insufficient evidence for a conviction, and the jury instruction focused on accomplice liability was too broad. The appeal court disagreed, and found there was sufficient evidence to support their conviction.

Only Mau argued her appeal before the state supreme court earlier this week, not Eden. The state's highest court is not expected to issue a ruling for several months.

Both Eden and Mau had been public figures in other cases in recent years. Both were leaders in the efforts to remove Morton junior high school teacher Michael Moulton from the class due to unprofessional conduct.

Mau often leads missing person search efforts, including a recent search for Lawrence W. Thorsteinson, an elderly Morton man with dementia.