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Attorney General Steve Marshall Statement on Arrest of Suspect in Murders of Tracie Hawlett and J.B. Beasley in 20-Year-Old Wiregrass Cold Case

(MONTGOMERY) – Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall issued the following statement today concerning the arrest of a suspect for the 1999 murders of Tracie Hawlett and J.B. Beasley of Dothan.

“For two decades the families of Tracie Hawlett and J.B. Beasley have sought answers and a suspect in the unsolved brutal murders of their 17-year-old girls. On the night of July 31, 1999, Hawlett and Beasley went together to a party in nearby Headland and lost their way. Sadly, they never made it back to their families. Their bodies were found the next day in the trunk of Beasley’s car. Both girls had been shot in the head.

“DNA evidence recovered from Beasley’s body and clothing helped to create a profile of the suspect, but despite our best combined efforts law enforcement were never able to find a genetic match – until now. On Friday, March 15, 2019, members of the Ozark Police Department’s Investigations Division, as well as Agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Alabama Attorney General’s Office arrested* Coley Lewis McCraney in Dale County, Alabama, on charges of capital murder and rape. McCraney, a resident of Dothan, had no prior criminal record which would have previously provided his DNA profile to law enforcement in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) run by the FBI. McCraney has remained anonymous to investigators until new DNA testing of forensic evidence utilizing family genetic analysis finally led law enforcement to McCraney as a suspect.

“I wish to commend Chief Marlos Walker and the Ozark Police Department for their exemplary investigative work that ultimately led us to identifying a suspect and making an arrest on Friday. The Alabama Attorney General’s Office, the Ozark Police Department, the Dale County Sheriff’s Office, the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, District Attorney Kirke Adams, and other law enforcement agencies have been supporting this investigation for many years. We will continue our efforts to assist in the investigation including providing digital forensic evidence analysis.

“Today, all who have sought justice for Tracie Hawlett and J.B. Beasley – including all the residents of the Wiregrass – are finally near closure in this long and painful case.”

**An arrest is merely an accusation. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*

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