



**Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Court of Criminal Appeals Upholds  
Murder Conviction in Covington County**

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals upheld the conviction of James Benton Horn, 53, of Andalusia for murder, arson second degree, and criminal mischief. Horn was convicted in Covington County Circuit Court on June 24, 2021, for the murder of his former employer, Bruce Nelson, as well as the arson of Nelson’s vehicle and residence.

The evidence at trial showed that on June 20, 2018, law enforcement officers in Covington County discovered Bruce Nelson’s body in the driver’s seat of his car. Nelson had been shot several times and stabbed with a knife. His body was also badly burned by the fire in his car. An investigation discovered that Horn had once worked for Nelson and that they had a recent disagreement. The evidence at trial further showed that Horn was apparently the last person to be seen with Nelson before his murder. Additionally, the State introduced DNA evidence that further tied Horn to Nelson’s vicious murder.

Covington County District Attorney Walt Merrell’s office successfully prosecuted this case and obtained a guilty verdict. Horn was sentenced to life imprisonment plus 25 for his crimes. Horn sought to have his convictions reversed on appeal.

“James Horn’s brutal attack and murder of Bruce Nelson as well as the attempts to destroy evidence of his crimes demand that he should receive the strongest sentence under the law,” said Attorney General Marshall.

The Attorney General's Criminal Appeals Division handled the case during the appeals process, arguing for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals to affirm Horn’s conviction. The Court did so in a decision issued on August 5, 2022.

Attorney General Marshall commended Assistant Attorney General Jordan Shelton. He also thanked Covington County District Attorney Walt Merrell and his staff for their valuable assistance in defending the murder conviction.

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