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

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed the murder conviction of Marty Gene Stafford, 32. Stafford was convicted in Limestone County Circuit Court on August 6, 2020, for the felony murder of Brenton Gatlin.

The evidence at trial showed that on the evening of July 25, 2017, Stafford went to the home of Brenton Gatlin to commit a robbery. During the robbery, Gatlin was shot in the neck by Stafford who was later apprehended hiding behind some lumber next to a nearby house. Gatlin died of his wounds. Stafford admitted to police that he entered Gatlin’s house to commit a robbery and engaged in a confrontation. Stafford, however, denied having a gun and insisted that he used his fists instead. The State introduced evidence in the form of messages via Facebook Messenger in which Stafford discussed in some detail his plan to rob Gatlin. Stafford even went so far as to post photographs showing him brandishing a semiautomatic pistol and the background in the photographs indicated that they were taken inside of Gatlin’s house.

Limestone County District Attorney Brian Jones’ office successfully prosecuted this case and obtained a guilty verdict. Stafford was sentenced to life imprisonment for his felony murder conviction. Stafford sought to have his convictions reversed on appeal.

The Attorney General's Criminal Appeals Division handled the case during the appeals process, arguing for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals to affirm Stafford’s conviction. The Court did so in a decision issued March 5, 2021.

Attorney General Marshall commended Assistant Attorney General Kristi Wilkerson for her successful work on this case, and thanked District Attorney Brian Jones and his staff for their valuable assistance in defending the murder conviction.

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