

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES THAT COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS UPHOLDS COVINGTON COUNTY COLD CASE MURDER CONVICTION

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals on Friday upheld the felony murder conviction of Eugene Wallace Black. Black, 55, of Andalusia, was convicted in August of 2015 for the murder of James “Nibby” Barton.

Evidence was presented at trial showing that on the morning of May 2, 1994, Black and others discussed their need for money, and one of Black’s associates mentioned that Barton possessed large amounts of cash at his convenience store. Black later asked that associate for a pistol, and she gave one to Black. Black left with others and returned approximately an hour later and told the woman that the “[r]obbery went bad.”

In 2013, Covington County Sheriff’s Investigator John Snodgrass of the Cold Case Task Force reinitiated the investigation of the murder of Barton. A former employer of Black testified at trial that in 2013, Black told him that he was nervous about the renewal of the investigation of Barton’s murder, and admitted that he had killed Barton during the robbery.

The case was prosecuted at trial by Covington County District Attorney Walt Merrell’s office. Black was sentenced to 70 years imprisonment for his felony murder conviction. He subsequently sought to have his conviction reversed on appeal.

The Attorney General's Criminal Appeals Section handled the case during the appeals process, arguing for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals to affirm the conviction. The Court did so in a decision issued on Friday, September 2.

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorney General Cecil Brendle of the Attorney General’s Criminal Appeals Section for his successful work in this case.

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