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Page 1 of 1

## **Attorney General Marshall Announces Court of Criminal Appeals Upholds Intentional Murder Conviction in Russell County**

(**Montgomery, Ala.**) - Attorney General Steve Marshall announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed the intentional murder conviction of Payton Jerel Wiggins, 25, of Phenix City. Wiggins was convicted in the Russell County Circuit Court on October 30, 2024.

The evidence at trial showed that in March of 2021 Wiggins was in the process of renting an apartment in Phenix City when he brutally murdered the apartment owner's handyman in an unprovoked attack with a knife. Wiggins was discovered straddling the victim's body and stabbing him numerous times. Wiggins gave investigators three different versions of what happened on the day of the murder.

Russell County District Attorney Rick Chancey successfully prosecuted this case and obtained a guilty verdict. Wiggins was sentenced to life imprisonment for his intentional murder conviction. Wiggins then sought to have his conviction 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 Wiggins's conviction. The Court did so in a decision issued Friday, August 14, 2026.

Attorney General Marshall commended Assistant Attorney General Stephen N. Dodd for his successful work on this case and thanks District Attorney Rick Chancey and his staff for their valuable assistance in obtaining the intentional murder conviction.

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