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Page 1 of 2

## **AG Announces Court of Criminal Appeals Upholds Capital Murder and Murder Convictions in Two Jefferson County Cases**

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced that on Friday the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed the capital murder convictions of Stevin Ra Dunning and the murder conviction of Tarus Hawkins. Both cases, which are unrelated, occurred in Jefferson County.

Dunning, 25, of Birmingham, was convicted in December 2016 for the murder of Vincent Chancellor. The evidence at trial showed that in the early morning hours of November 9, 2014, Chancellor and his girlfriend left a nightclub in Birmingham and drove to a nearby restaurant where Chancellor got out of the vehicle to order food. When Chancellor returned, Dunning approached him, brandished a gun, and demanded that Chancellor give him everything he had. Chancellor gave Dunning his cellular telephone and the money he had in his pockets. Dunning then ordered Chancellor to give him any valuables that were inside the car. As Chancellor began to unhook a television set installed in the car, he retrieved a gun under the seat that he kept in the car. The two men shot at each other and both were wounded during the exchange. Chancellor then stumbled to his car and drove away but was only able to drive a short distance before losing consciousness. Paramedics arrived shortly thereafter and took Chancellor to the hospital where he died later that day as a result of the gunshot wounds.

Because the murder was committed during the course of a first-degree robbery; the victim was killed while in a vehicle; and, Dunning killed the victim by firing a gun within a vehicle, Dunning was convicted of three capital offenses. He was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for each conviction.

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In the second case, Tarus Hawkins, 32, of Bessemer, was convicted in May 2017 for the murder of Henry Toles. On the evening of May 12, 2015, Toles and his girlfriend, Galencia Baker, drove to the Wylam Junction Convenience Store to see Toles' cousin. Toles went inside the store. After waiting a few minutes, Baker went inside also. When Baker came back out, she saw a girl she knew sitting in a white car and went over to talk to the girl. Hawkins was standing outside the front passenger side of the car. Baker testified that when she approached the car, Hawkins said something like she "spooked" him. Toles came out of the store and asked Baker what Hawkins said to her. After a verbal exchange between Toles and Hawkins about what Hawkins said to Baker, Toles and Baker turned and walked toward their car. Without warning, Hawkins shot Toles in the back. Toles died of the gunshot wounds. Hawkins was sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment for his murder conviction.

Both cases were prosecuted at trial by Jefferson County District Attorney Mike Anderton's office. Each defendant was seeking to have his convictions reversed on appeal.

The Attorney General's Criminal Appeals Division handled the cases during the appeals process, arguing for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals to affirm the convictions. The Court did so in decisions issued Friday. Attorney General Marshall commended Criminal Appeals Division Chief Beth Slate Poe and Assistant Attorney General Yvonne Saxon for their successful work in these cases.