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Thursday, February 1, 2024

Erica Stefanko Sentenced to LIFE IN PRISON

AKRON, Ohio (Thursday, February 1, 2024) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Jennifer Towell sentenced Erica Stefanko, 41, of Rittman, to LIFE IN PRISON in connection with the 2012 murder of 25-year-old Ashley Biggs.

Stefanko will be eligible for parole after serving 30 years of her sentence. Judge Towell also designated Stefanko as a violent offender. The violent offender specification requires Stefanko to register with the local sheriff if she is released from prison.

On January 31, 2024, a Summit County jury found Stefanko guilty of the following charges:

- One Count of Aggravated Murder – a special felony
- One Count of Murder – a special felony

On the evening of June 20, 2012, Erica Stefanko lured Ashley Biggs to an empty parking lot of a closed business in New Franklin by ordering a pizza to the location. Biggs delivered the pizza as Chad Cobb waited for her. Cobb tased Biggs, then beat and strangled her. Stefanko, who was married to Cobb at the time, followed Cobb as he drove Biggs' body to an empty field in Chippewa Township in Wayne County. Stefanko then took Cobb back home where he washed off evidence of the crime. At the time, Cobb and Biggs had been going through a very contentious custody battle over their then 7-year-old daughter.

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This was the second trial for Stefanko. In November of 2020 a different Summit County jury found her guilty of the same charges. The case was appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In July of 2022, the Ninth Circuit overturned the conviction based on the remote testimony of Chad Cobb. During the 2020 trial, protocols in place for the COVID-19 pandemic allowed Cobb to testify from prison instead of travelling to the Summit County Courthouse. The decision by the Ninth Circuit sent the case back to the Summit County Court of Common Pleas for retrial.

In February of 2013, Cobb pled guilty to the following charges:

- One Count of Aggravated Murder – a felony of the 1st degree
- One Count of Kidnapping – a felony of the 1st degree
- One Count of Aggravated Robbery – a felony of the 1st degree
- One Count of Felonious Assault – a felony of the 2nd degree
- One Count of Retaliation – a felony of the 3rd degree
- One Count of Tampering with Evidence – a felony of the 3rd degree
- One Count of Gross Abuse of a Corpse – a felony of the 3rd degree
- One Count of Possessing Criminal Tools – a felony of the 5th degree
- Domestic Violence – a misdemeanor of the 1st degree

Cobb is currently serving a life sentence and is not eligible for parole.