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BENTLEY FOUND GUILTY OF MURDER FOR 2014 KILLING OF JOENATHAN WILLIAMS

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces today that Stephen Webster Bentley, of Jacksonville, was found guilty by a jury of Second-Degree Murder. Bentley now faces a maximum of life in Florida State Prison. A sentencing hearing is scheduled before the Honorable Bruce R. Anderson, Jr. the week of May 13, 2019.

Bentley and victim Joenathan Williams lived together for a brief time prior to Williams' murder. On June 2, 2014, Williams' friends conducted a welfare check at his Arlington residence when they found him dead with several large wounds to his upper body that appeared they came from a large-bladed object. Williams' left hand was severed; his right hand was also severely cut.

Approximately two hours before first responders arrived, Bentley took one witness to a pawn shop. The witness said during that time Bentley became increasingly angry when he was told Williams was gay, which led to others in the neighborhood believing Bentley was also gay.

In the hours after Bentley returned, several witnesses tried to visit Williams to purchase cigarettes from him, but Bentley answered the door. Some witnesses said Bentley hid his hand and body behind the door when he answered — one saw Bentley's hand was bleeding from cuts. Bentley told him he cut his hand at work, although surveillance video of Bentley from earlier in the day showed there were no cuts. Witnesses also said Bentley was sweating and acting irregular when he answered the door. Further investigation led to the discovery of Williams' blood on Bentley's belongings as well as blood in Bentley's vehicle.

The case was investigated by Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and is being prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Dan Skinner and Coreylyn Crawford.