

Federal court removes hold on Kitsap killer's execution

By Andrew Binion

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A federal court's hold on the execution of the state's longest serving death row inmate was lifted Wednesday but that does not mean Jonathan Lee Gentry's days are numbered.

Gentry, 57, was sentenced to death in 1991 for the 1988 murder of Cassie Holden, 12, whose body was found off the trails beside Rolling Hills Golf Course in East Bremerton. He was 34 at the time of Cassie's death.

Although Judge Robert Lasnik's removal of the stay indicates, for now, the federal courts will allow the execution to take place, a state hold on Gentry's sentence still is in place until at least Wednesday and further appeals are pending.

"This was something that was a forgone conclusion for a while," said Tim Ford, Gentry's lawyer, calling it a "nonevent."

Ford said there still is an appeal regarding retesting DNA material and another motion in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Gentry's conviction and death sentence have withstood several appeals and attacks, including claims that he received ineffective counsel, that the trial was tainted by racism — Gentry is black, Cassie was white — and that Gentry's trial attorneys hadn't been properly informed of jailhouse witnesses' background.

Most recently, last month the state Supreme Court ruled Gentry's trial was not affected by racist language to the point that it jeopardized the integrity of the process.

To keep the state stay in place following the Supreme Court's denial of Gentry's appeal, he will have to file a motion for reconsideration, according to the state Office of the Attorney General.



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