

Pegram widow angry that suspect let out of jail

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Tosha Cantrell said she doesn't feel as if the law is on her side right now.

Last month Cantrell watched in disbelief as her husband was shot and killed in her next-door neighbor's front yard. On Tuesday she found out the woman accused in the homicide was being released from jail.



Gillian Kennedy, left, and Tosha Cantrell

Cantrell said she was "beyond words" when Circuit Judge Robert Burch set the suspect's bail at \$150,000 last week.

"I was devastated," she said. "I'm sitting there wondering who to trust because I don't feel like the justice system is working for me."

Gillian Kennedy, 34, of 5600 Zapata Drive was released from Cheatham County Detention Center after posting bail.

Kennedy was charged with second-degree murder in the slaying of Kenneth "Rooster" Cantrell, 38. She also faces 12 counts of aggravated assault related to the shooting.

Steve Powers, Kennedy's attorney, did not return calls seeking comment.

On May 21, Kenneth Cantrell was shot with a 12-gauge shotgun at close range while in Kennedy's yard. The Kennedys and the Cantrells had been feuding for four months.

If Kennedy is found guilty of the murder charge, she would serve 15-60 years in prison. Depending on the severity of the aggravated assault charges, she could serve two to 15 years if found guilty.

Cantrell said she and Kennedy were friendly once, but as Kennedy's behavior changed the relationship became strained. Cantrell said it did not take much to set her neighbor into a rage.

Civil attorney John Hollins Jr., who has consulted Tosha Cantrell on another legal matter related to the case, said there was nothing improper about Kennedy's release.

"Bond is a mechanism to ensure a defendant will appear in court when he or she is supposed to be there," he said. "The defense attorney's goal is to get that bond as low as possible in order to get them out of jail.

"It's rare that someone is denied bond."

Prosecuting attorney Bob Wilson agreed, saying, "Under state law everybody is entitled to a reasonable bond." He said the only exception would be people charged with capital crimes — crimes where the death penalty is being sought.

Karen Breedlove, a close friend of the Cantrell family, said law or no law, Kennedy's release doesn't seem fair.

"I'm not stingy or anything, but the Kennedy children have both of their parents right now," she said. "All the Cantrell children have is their mother, and that's just not right."

Both Breedlove and Cantrell are enraged that the bail amount was so low.

"It just seems that it would have been higher," said Cantrell, who was charged with vandalism and criminal trespassing on the Kennedys' property less than 24 hours after her husband's death. "I just don't understand what happened in there."

David Raybin, a criminal defense attorney who works with Hollins, said the law prohibits setting bail so high that a defendant can't afford it. Although bail is a right, judges can put special conditions on the defendant's release.

Burch told Kennedy she has to stay outside of Pegasus city limits and must stay away from the remaining victims who are listed in her indictment.

Raybin said that should Kennedy violate either order or commit a crime while she is out on bail, she would go back to jail.

"We have confidence in the judicial system, and certainly if that woman does anything to threaten anyone, that would be an immediate violation of her bail," he said. "If she violates any of that she will be incarcerated."

Breedlove said those assurances are not quite enough for her.

"I'm scared for everybody," she said. "I've never had a run-in with her, but I'm scared for everybody."