

Ex-cop faces 22 years in prison for raping teen - LimaOhio.com - limaohio.com

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2015 Cop Pedophile Justin Bentz

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LIMA — A prosecutor said Tuesday he will ask a judge to give former Lima Police Officer Justin Bentz the maximum sentence, which could be as much as 22 years in prison for raping a 16-year-old girl.

Prosecutor Todd Schroeder said Judge David Cheney of Allen County Common Pleas Court will have to decide whether the law requires the charges of rape and kidnapping to be combined at sentencing. Each charge carries a maximum of 11 years in prison.

Bentz, 28, sat stone-faced as Cheney read his verdicts of guilty on rape, kidnapping, two counts of sexual battery, and a misdemeanor furnishing alcohol to a minor for crimes on June 11 at a home on Agerter Road.

Cheney also explained how he arrived at his decision.

Two people sitting behind Bentz became emotional after the verdicts were read, including one man who expressed his anger over Cheney's decision as he left the courtroom pushing a woman in his way.

Bentz was taken away in handcuffs after his attorney, Bill Kluge, requested Bentz remain out of jail on bond. Cheney said Bentz was trained to use a gun and worried about the potential danger it would pose to the victim or her family before he denied the request.

Sentencing was set for 9 a.m. April 14.

Bentz did not make a statement and Kluge declined comment afterward. The victim and her family also declined to comment.

Cheney said the deciding factor was Bentz's testimony, which did not match the victim's testimony and the evidence in the case. He said Bentz's version of events that night were the complete opposite of the victim's version.

When Cheney considered all evidence from a two-day trial last week, including the victim's testimony, her age, and maturity level, the judge said he found her to be credible.

"I find her statements, behavior and reactions are very consistent with the material facts," he said.

Cheney also said the victim "looks extremely young" while saying others described her maturity as consistent with a 13-year-old girl, which several people said she looked that age.

Cheney said Bentz's testimony was hard to believe coupled with the fact he was a police officer while trying to plead an ignorance to the victim's age.

"He indicated it never occurred to him she was a minor," Cheney said. "As a police officer, Mr. Bentz had every reason to believe this child was extremely young and to say that the thought of her age never crossed his mind, frankly, borders on the destruction of credibility."

Schroeder said Bentz's refusal to even acknowledge the victim appeared to be young and to say she looked at least 21 just couldn't be believed.

"The judge didn't even have to rely on that because she testified in person and the judge was able to view clearly this is an underage person," Schroeder said.

While Schroeder had no idea what Bentz was going to say when he took the stand, he said Bentz's testimony, including refusing to admit to any wrongdoing and even denying he was a peace officer at the time of the crime, destroyed his credibility and led to his conviction. Bentz also painted the 92-pound, 5-foot-2 girl as the aggressor out to have sex with him.

"His choice to testify did not help his defense," Schroeder said.

Bentz, who was in his first year as a Lima police officer, also tried to claim he missed four hours of education from the previous year, which stripped him of his status as a peace officer, which was more than stretching the facts, Schroeder said.

"He had a response for everything, even for the element of being a peace officer. He was not prepared to acknowledge it was a fact. When he couldn't even acknowledge he was a peace officer he's not going to acknowledge any other facts," Schroeder said.

Testimony at trial said Bentz completed the necessary classes immediately after he found out he was out of compliance and only was prohibited from working the street until he took the classes, which he did that night. The classes, ironically, were on sexual assault against children, the collection and preservation of evidence, and pitfalls in the prosecution of cases.

When Bentz got off work he returned home where he lived with a friend. The victim was at the home staying with her older sister. After his roommates were sleeping he came out of his bedroom without a shirt, offered the girl high-proof alcohol and then raped her after she drank five shots.

Schroeder said the judge's decision as well as the hard work and willingness by police to investigate the allegations, especially against another police officer, proves the system works.



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A woman behind Justin Bentz becomes emotional after the former Lima police officer is taken away in handcuffs for raping a 16-year-old girl.