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Ga. trooper's slaying prompts bill

Proposed law forbids release without paid bond in major crimes, but is paid bond really enough to keep dangerous criminals off the street?

By Andria Simmons and April Hunt
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A state representative from Loganville is proposing legislation that would prohibit serious criminal offenders from being released from jail without paying bond, following the slaying of a state trooper Dec. 27.

House Bill 32, filed Wednesday by State Rep. Len Walker, R-Loganville, is called the Trooper First Class Chadwick Lee LeCroy Act. The Georgia General Assembly convenes for the 2011 session Monday.

Walker's bill states that a person charged with certain serious and violent felonies cannot be released on their own recognizance, meaning they will not be let out of jail without posting bail. Typically a person released on their own recognizance signs an "OR" or "signature" bond, simply promising to appear for their court date.

Furthermore, the bill provides that if an offender is released on a signature bond and fails to show up for trial, the judge can issue an order for their arrest.

Gregory Favors, 30, of Atlanta, is accused of gunning down LeCroy, a 38-year-old married father of two sons, following an attempt to flee from a traffic stop in northwest Atlanta. LeCroy was promoted posthumously to the rank of corporal.

Favors is charged with murder and aggravated assault against a law enforcement officer. Favors, who has a lengthy rap sheet, had been arrested three times recently after trying to flee police. Each time he was released on bond against the recommendation of a pretrial services officer.

Prohibitions similar to those included in Walker's latest bill were removed from a criminal justice bill that the Loganville Republican successfully pushed for last year.

Walker said he does not want to suggest that LeCroy's shooting could have been avoided if the prohibitions had been included in that law. Instead, he said, he wants to amend a state law on ankle monitoring that he believes would have helped.

"I see no reason whatsoever an ankle monitor wasn't on Favors, especially with his history," Walker said.

Under current law, judicial circuits can opt into an ankle-monitor process that makes the provider of the devices a surety for the bond. Gwinnett's circuit bench helped develop the law and uses the system. Many others, including Fulton and DeKalb, do not.

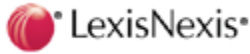
A potential amendment to the law would include a penalty against any providers that do not become the surety, if there is a problem.

"We have the technology," Walker said. "We need to use it."

Following LeCroy's death, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed and Atlanta Police Chief George Turner joined Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard in criticizing the Superior Court's practice of assigning an unelected magistrate to run its "rocket docket" and decide bail for fast-tracked cases.

A spokesman for Fulton County Superior Court said Tuesday that the court will keep its fast-track system but will put an elected judge back in charge.

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