

Measure W431

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please carefully read the following description of a ballot measure that was written by a disinterested expert. Feel free to take notes or outline passages as you read.

This should take you approximately 10 minutes.

BALLOT MEASURE W431

BACKGROUND

Under existing law, a person convicted of first degree murder can be punished in one of three ways: (1) by death, (2) by a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole, or (3) by a life sentence with the possibility of parole, in which case the individual would become eligible for parole after serving seven years. A person convicted of second degree murder can be sentenced to 5, 6, or 7 years in prison. Up to one-third of a prison sentence may be reduced through good behavior. Thus, a person sentenced to 6 years in prison may be eligible for parole after serving 4 year.

Generally speaking, the law requires a sentence of death or life without the possibility of parole when an individual is convicted of first degree murder under one or more of the following special circumstances: (1) the murderer was hired to commit the murder; (2) the murder was committed with explosive devices; (3) the murder involved the killing of a specified peace officer or witness; (4) the murder was committed during the commission or attempted commission of a robbery, kidnapping, forceable rape, a lewd or lascivious act with a child, or first degree burglary; (5) the murder involved the torture of the victim; or (6) the murderer has been convicted of more than one offense of murder in the first or second degree. If any of these special circumstances is found to exist, the judge or jury must "take into account and be guided by" aggravating or mitigating factors in sentencing the convicted person to either death or life in prison without the possibility of parole. "Aggravating" factors which might warrant a death sentence include brutal treatment of the murder victim. "Mitigating" factors, which might warrant life imprisonment, include extreme mental or emotional disturbance when the murder occurred.

PROPOSAL

This proposition would: (1) increase the penalties for first and second degree murder, (2) expand the list of special circumstances requiring a sentence of either death or life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, and (3) revise existing law relating to mitigating or aggravating circumstances.

The measure provides that individuals convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment shall serve a minimum of 25 years, less whatever credit for good behavior they have earned, before they can be eligible for parole. Accordingly, anyone sentenced to life

imprisonment would have to serve at least 16 years and eight months. The penalty for second degree murder would be increased to 15 years to life imprisonment. A person sentenced to 15 years would have to serve at least 10 years before becoming eligible for parole.

The proposition would also expand and modify the list of special circumstances which require either the death penalty or life without the possibility of parole. As revised by the measure, the list of special circumstances would, generally speaking, include the following: (1) murder for any financial gain; (2) murder involving concealed explosives or explosives that are mailed or delivered; (3) murder committed for purposes of preventing arrest or aiding escape from custody; (4) murder of any peace officer, federal law enforcement officer, fireman, witness, prosecutor, judge, or elected or appointed official with respect to the performance of such person's duties; (5) murder involving particularly heinous, atrocious, or cruel actions; (6) killing a victim while lying in wait; 1 (7) murder committed during or while fleeing from the commission or attempted commission of robbery, kidnapping, specified sex crimes (including those sex crimes that now represent "special circumstances"), burglary, arson, and train wrecking; (8) murder in which the victim is tortured or poisoned; (9) murder based on the victim's race, religion, nationality, or country of origin; or (10) the murderer has been convicted of more than one offense of murder in the first or second degree

Also, this proposition would specifically make persons involved in the crime other than the actual murderer subject to the death penalty or life imprisonment without possibility of parole under specified circumstances.

Finally, the proposition would make the death sentence mandatory if the judge or jury determines that the aggravating circumstances surrounding the crime outweigh the mitigating circumstances. If aggravating circumstances are found not to outweigh mitigating circumstances, the proposition would require a life sentence without the possibility of parole. Prior to weighing the aggravating and mitigating factors, the jury would have to be informed that life without the possibility of parole might at a later date be subject to commutation or modification, thereby allowing parole.



STOP!

Please go to the online survey, enter the 4-character code for this ballot measure (printed at the top and bottom of this page) and answer the survey questions.