
To accompany the petition of Michael J. Ward relative to the punishment for second degree murder and that provision be made for a review of the cases of persons convicted and sentenced for said crime. Judiciary (Joint).

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Thirty-One.

An Act relative to the Punishment for the Crime of Murder in the Second Degree and providing for a Review of the Cases of Persons Convicted and Sentenced for Said Crime.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section two of chapter two hundred
 2 and sixty-five of the General Laws is hereby
 3 amended by adding at the end thereof the words:—
 4 or for any term of not less than twenty years,— so
 5 as to read as follows:—*Section 2.* Whoever is
 6 guilty of murder in the first degree shall suffer the
 7 punishment of death, and whoever is guilty of mur-
 8 der in the second degree shall be punished by im-
 9 prisonment in the state prison for life or for any
 10 term of not less than twenty years.

1 SECTION 2. A special commission consisting of a
 2 justice of the superior court to be designated by

3 the chief justice thereof, who shall be chairman,
4 the attorney general or an assistant attorney gen-
5 eral to be designated by him, and the chairman of
6 the board of parole, is hereby established for the
7 purpose of reviewing forthwith the cases of all
8 persons who have been sentenced for the crime of
9 murder in the second degree prior to the effective
10 date of this act. Said commission is hereby vested
11 with the power to reduce, with the approval of the
12 governor and council, to a term of not less than
13 twenty years in the state prison the punishment of
14 any person sentenced as aforesaid, if such reduction
15 in sentence in any such case shall be deemed by
16 said commission to be justified. Said commission
17 shall be provided with quarters in the state house,
18 or elsewhere, may call upon the commissioner of
19 correction and any other official, commission, de-
20 partment or board of the commonwealth and of
21 the several counties and municipalities, for such
22 information and assistance as may be necessary for
23 the purposes of this section. Said commission may
24 expend, with the approval of the governor and
25 council, for clerical and other necessary services
26 and expenses, such sums as may hereafter be ap-
27 propriated, and shall submit a report to the gover-
28 nor on or before December thirty-first of the current
29 year, setting forth in detail its action under the
30 provisions of this section.

