

SENTENCING FOR FIRST DEGREE FELONY

MURDER

2006 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Lorie D. Fowlke

Senate Sponsor: David L. Thomas

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LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill modifies the Criminal Code regarding predicate offenses referred to in defining first degree murder, provides that the minimum prison term for first degree murder is 15 years, and establishes a defendant's "position of trust" as an aggravating factor in sentencing murder offenses.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ adds the offense of felony discharge of a weapon or firearm from a vehicle to the list of predicate offenses, the commission of which in the course of committing a homicide is an element of first degree felony murder;
- ▶ amends the sentence for first degree murder to increase the minimum term from five years to 15 years; and
- ▶ adds as an aggravating factor, when determining imprisonment for specified homicide offenses, that the defendant held a position of trust in relation to the victim.

Monies Appropriated in this Bill:

31 None

32 **Other Special Clauses:**

33 None

34 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

35 AMENDS:

36 **76-5-203**, as last amended by Chapter 146, Laws of Utah 2003

37 ENACTS:

38 **76-3-406.5**, Utah Code Annotated 1953



40 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

41 Section 1. Section **76-3-406.5** is enacted to read:

42 **76-3-406.5. Aggravating factors in imprisonment for certain criminal homicide**  
43 **cases.**

44 (1) As used in this section:

45 (a) "Cohabitant" has the same definition as in Section 30-6-1.

46 (b) "Position of trust" includes the position of a spouse, parent, or cohabitant.

47 (2) It is an aggravating factor that the person occupied a position of trust in relation to  
48 the victim.

49 (3) The Board of Pardons and Parole shall consider the aggravating factor in

50 Subsection (2) in determining the length of imprisonment for a person convicted of:

51 (a) aggravated murder under Section 76-5-202;

52 (b) murder under Section 76-5-203; or

53 (c) manslaughter under Section 76-5-205.

54 (4) The sentencing court shall consider the aggravating factor in Subsection (2) in  
55 sentencing a person convicted of manslaughter under Section 76-5-205.

56 Section 2. Section **76-5-203** is amended to read:

57 **76-5-203. Murder.**

58 (1) As used in this section, "predicate offense" means:

- 59 (a) a violation of Section 58-37d-4 or 58-37d-5, Clandestine Drug Lab Act;
- 60 (b) child abuse, under Subsection 76-5-109(2)(a), when the victim is younger than 18
- 61 years of age;
- 62 (c) kidnapping under Section 76-5-301;
- 63 (d) child kidnapping under Section 76-5-301.1;
- 64 (e) aggravated kidnapping under Section 76-5-302;
- 65 (f) rape of a child under Section 76-5-402.1;
- 66 (g) object rape of a child under Section 76-5-402.3;
- 67 (h) sodomy upon a child under Section 76-5-403.1;
- 68 (i) forcible sexual abuse under Section 76-5-404;
- 69 (j) sexual abuse of a child or aggravated sexual abuse of a child under Section
- 70 76-5-404.1;
- 71 (k) rape under Section 76-5-402;
- 72 (l) object rape under Section 76-5-402.2;
- 73 (m) forcible sodomy under Section 76-5-403;
- 74 (n) aggravated sexual assault under Section 76-5-405;
- 75 (o) arson under Section 76-6-102;
- 76 (p) aggravated arson under Section 76-6-103;
- 77 (q) burglary under Section 76-6-202;
- 78 (r) aggravated burglary under Section 76-6-203;
- 79 (s) robbery under Section 76-6-301;
- 80 (t) aggravated robbery under Section 76-6-302; [or]
- 81 (u) escape or aggravated escape under Section 76-8-309[=]; or
- 82 (v) a felony violation of Subsection 76-10-508(2) regarding discharge of a firearm or
- 83 dangerous weapon.
- 84 (2) Criminal homicide constitutes murder if:
- 85 (a) the actor intentionally or knowingly causes the death of another;
- 86 (b) intending to cause serious bodily injury to another, the actor commits an act clearly

87 dangerous to human life that causes the death of another;

88 (c) acting under circumstances evidencing a depraved indifference to human life, the  
89 actor engages in conduct which creates a grave risk of death to another and thereby causes the  
90 death of another;

91 (d) (i) the actor is engaged in the commission, attempted commission, or immediate  
92 flight from the commission or attempted commission of any predicate offense, or is a party to  
93 the predicate offense;

94 (ii) a person other than a party as defined in Section 76-2-202 is killed in the course of  
95 the commission, attempted commission, or immediate flight from the commission or attempted  
96 commission of any predicate offense; and

97 (iii) the actor acted with the intent required as an element of the predicate offense;

98 (e) the actor recklessly causes the death of a peace officer while in the commission or  
99 attempted commission of:

100 (i) an assault against a peace officer under Section 76-5-102.4; or

101 (ii) interference with a peace officer while making a lawful arrest under Section  
102 76-8-305 if the actor uses force against a peace officer;

103 (f) commits a homicide which would be aggravated murder, but the offense is reduced  
104 pursuant to Subsection 76-5-202(3); or

105 (g) the actor commits aggravated murder, but special mitigation is established under  
106 Section 76-5-205.5.

107 (3) (a) Murder is a first degree felony.

108 (b) A person who is convicted of murder shall be sentenced to imprisonment for an  
109 indeterminate term of not less than 15 years and which may be for life.

110 (4) (a) It is an affirmative defense to a charge of murder or attempted murder that the  
111 defendant caused the death of another or attempted to cause the death of another:

112 (i) under the influence of extreme emotional distress for which there is a reasonable  
113 explanation or excuse; or

114 (ii) under a reasonable belief that the circumstances provided a legal justification or

115 excuse for his conduct although the conduct was not legally justifiable or excusable under the  
116 existing circumstances.

117 (b) Under Subsection (4)(a)(i) emotional distress does not include:

118 (i) a condition resulting from mental illness as defined in Section 76-2-305; or

119 (ii) distress that is substantially caused by the defendant's own conduct.

120 (c) The reasonableness of an explanation or excuse under Subsection (4)(a)(i) or the  
121 reasonable belief of the actor under Subsection (4)(a)(ii) shall be determined from the  
122 viewpoint of a reasonable person under the then existing circumstances.

123 (d) This affirmative defense reduces charges only as follows:

124 (i) murder to manslaughter; and

125 (ii) attempted murder to attempted manslaughter.