News

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham is pictured in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Nov. 3, 202

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham is pictured in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Nov. 3, 2022. Lujan Grisham has issued a public health emergency on guns in Albuquerque and its county, banning open and concealed carry, in response to recent violence. (OSV News/Reuters/Kevin Lamarque)

Gina Christian

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

September 13, 2023

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A New Mexico archbishop said the state's temporary ban on openly carrying firearms in and around Albuquerque is not "a threat to the Constitution."

"I believe Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham is correct to point out the crisis we are experiencing in Albuquerque and the County of Bernalillo. The number of gun deaths we witness here is deplorable and tragic," said Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe in a Sept. 11 statement.

On Sept. 7, Lujan Grisham signed executive order 2023-130, which declared a state of public health emergency due to gun violence. The order, set to remain in effect until Oct. 6, cited a 45% rise in gun deaths from 2009 to 2018 and an increase in mass shootings. The governor also noted that gun violence is the leading cause of

death among the state's children, with three slain in recent weeks.

The following day, Lujan Grisham signed a public health order announcing a statewide enforcement plan for gun violence, as well as a plan for reducing deaths from the synthetic opioid fentanyl.

The plan includes a 30-day suspension of concealed and open carrying of firearms in Albuquerque and surrounding Bernalillo County.

Lujan Grisham's orders have evoked backlash from gun rights advocates and fellow lawmakers, several of whom have called the move unconstitutional. New Mexico state representatives John Block and Stefani Lord, both Republicans, have called for the governor, a Democrat, to be impeached.

Advertisement

The National Association for Gun Rights has filed a lawsuit against Lujan Grisham and New Mexico Secretary of Health Patrick Allen, seeking a temporary restraining order as well as the granting of a preliminary and then permanent injunction. New Mexico Republicans are expected to file a similar suit.

The orders also drew criticism from some gun control advocates. March for Our Lives co-founder David Hogg, a survivor of the 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, took to X (formerly Twitter) Sept. 9 to protest.

"I support gun safety, but there is no such thing as a state public health emergency exception to the U.S. Constitution," said Hogg, repeating verbatim a Sept. 9 tweet by Democratic Congressman Ted Lieu of California.

Yet Wester said the governor "has been consistent in addressing gun safety through legislation and is not now attacking the Second Amendment."

"She knows the law," said Wester. "I believe she is trying to get us to solve what has become a crisis in our state."

He added that "the focus should be on the sanctity of human life. That is the point."

The archbishop added he hoped "to hear more of an outcry over an eleven-year-old boy killed by a bullet fired in a road rage incident than over the right to carry a gun,"

referencing the death of Froylan Villegas, who was fatally shot Sept. 6 while traveling in a car near Isotopes Park. The child's 20-year-old aunt was injured in the shooting, which police suspect was due to road rage. Some 17 bullets were fired in the attack.

Five-year-old Galilea Samaniego was killed in her sleep Aug. 13 shots were fired at her residence. Five teens have been arrested for the drive-by shooting.

On July 28, 13-year-old Amber Archuleta was shot by a teen friend in Questa, New Mexico, while listening to music.

"I ask all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, along with all the faithful, to keep the victims of gun violence in your prayers so that we might take steps to solve the tragedy of gun violence in our society," said Wester.