

Gov. announces statewide enforcement plan for gun violence, fentanyl reduction

Written by gallupsun

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SANTA FE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced on Sept. 8 a new public health order that outlines immediate actions aimed at quickly reducing gun violence and illegal drug use in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County.

The recent shooting deaths of a 13-year-old girl on July 28, a 5-year-old girl on Aug. 14, and an 11-year-old boy on Sept. 6, as well as two mass shootings this year spurred the governor to declare gun violence a public health emergency on Sept. 7. The Sept. 8 public health order includes directives to curb the gun violence and drug abuse that the Governor has declared to be public health emergencies.

"As I said [on Sept. 7, the time for standard measures has passed," Lujan Grisham said. "And when New Mexicans are afraid to be in crowds, to take their kids to school, to leave a baseball game – when their very right to exist is threatened by the prospect of violence at every turn – something is very wrong."

During a substantive and earnest conversation on Sept. 8 with public safety officials including Bernalillo County District Attorney Sam Bregman, Bernalillo County Sheriff John Allen, Albuquerque Police Chief Harold Medina, former State Police Chief Pete Kassetas, and state law enforcement leadership, the governor expanded on her plans to drastically reduce the number of violent incidents and fentanyl-related deaths in New Mexico.

The governor also signed an executive order declaring illegal drugs a public health emergency on Sept. 8.

The action plan includes a suspension of open and concealed carry laws in Bernalillo County, temporarily prohibiting the carrying of guns on public property with certain exceptions. Exceptions include for licensed security guards and law enforcement officers. Citizens with permits to carry firearms are free to possess their weapons on private property (such as at a gun range or gun store), provided they transport the firearm in a locked box, use a trigger lock, or some other mechanism that renders the gun incapable of being fired.

The public health order also directs:

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- The Regulation and Licensing Division to conduct monthly inspections of licensed firearm dealers to ensure compliance with all sales and storage laws.
- The Department of Health, along with the Environment Department, to begin wastewater testing for illegal substances such as fentanyl at schools.
- The Department of Health to compile and issue a comprehensive report on gunshot victims presenting at hospitals in New Mexico, which shall include (if available): demographic data of gunshot victims, including age, gender, race, and ethnicity; data on gunshot victim's healthcare outcomes; the brand and caliber of the firearm used; the general circumstances leading to the injury; the impact of gunshot victims on New Mexico's healthcare system; and any other pertinent information.
- A prohibition on firearms on state property, including state buildings and schools. This also includes other places of education where children gather, such as parks.
- The State Police to add officers in Albuquerque with funding for overtime provided.
- The Children, Youth and Families Department to immediately suspend the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative and evaluate juvenile probation protocols.

McKinley County Sheriff James Maiorano III released a statement in response to Lujan Grisham's public health order:

"An 11-year-old boy was killed by an armed assailant in Albuquerque and a manhunt is still underway to apprehend that criminal," Maiorano said. I offer my condolences to the family in this very difficult time. I believe the Albuquerque Police Department has committed resources to finding that criminal and bringing justice for the family."

But he also expressed his disapproval of the governor's suspension of open and concealed carry laws.

"However, the Governor has reacted by suspending the rights of law-abiding citizens to carry a firearm to protect us against these same criminals. In her own speech this evening the Governor stated she does not expect criminals to follow this order," Maiorano said. "I swore to protect and defend the laws of New Mexico and the U.S. Constitution and cannot support a 'public health' order that infringes upon the rights of law-abiding citizens to defend themselves."

The public health order does not affect McKinley County yet, but it could in the future.

"I think we are all greatly saddened by the violent crime in the Albuquerque Metro area and should work together to reduce the crime rate Statewide. We cannot start this fight by taking all the guns from the good guys while publicly recognizing the bad guys will still carry them and use them against us," Maiorano said. "Although her order does not currently affect the citizens of McKinley County it is a public health order and subject to change. I do not support the

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Governor's temporary suspension of legal concealed carry and open carry firearms. This will directly impact and infringe upon the law-abiding citizens of New Mexico."

The Governor's orders went into effect immediately.

