

# Bishop Mark J. Seitz, other religious leaders oppose bill that would ease carrying of guns

*By Maria Cortes Gonzalez-El Paso Times-April 21, 2021*

Bishop Mark J. Seitz referenced the El Paso Walmart shooting in 2019 in his opposition to H.B. 1927 on Wednesday during a news conference.

The state House legislation would eliminate the requirement for Texas residents to get a license to carry handguns if they are not already prohibited by state or federal law from possessing a firearm.



**Mom of student killed in Parkland attack says unite, stop gun violence**

Patricia Oliver, whose son, Joaquin, was killed in the Parkland, Florida, school mass shooting, speaks of the El Paso attack Saturday, Aug. 3, 2019. Vic Kolenc, El Paso Times

Seitz joined several bishops and faith leaders in Texas, along with the **Network of Texas IAF Organizations**, in opposing the legislation headed to the state Senate. The network is a nonpartisan coalition of 10 primarily faith-based organizations.

The group is calling on Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick to protect Texans by rejecting the state House attempts to take away training and license-to-carry requirements for gun owners.

Seitz, who is from Wisconsin, said he came from a family where gun ownership and hunting were part of his upbringing. However, he is concerned about gun owners having proper training.

"Our country has always agreed that there should be some limits on the disbursement of weapons and their presence in public places," he said. "On Aug. 3, 2019, a 21-year-old with an assault weapon went into a Walmart in El Paso and began shooting people.

"When he was finished several minutes later, 23 people were mortally wounded and another 25 were seriously hurt. I'm from El Paso, but we're not looking for some idealized notion of the Wild Wild West," he said. "A major problem we have in society is that guns are seen as a way of solving problems. Even as a means of self-defense, training is needed to assure that they do not simply put innocent people at risk."

Seitz said the removal of permanent requirements would have a negative impact.

"Criminals and people who are angry or unstable will find guns more accessible," he said. "Untrained people will be handling guns in public. They will put those individuals themselves at risk in several ways: They could accidentally discharge the weapon and harm themselves. They could have a gun taken from them. They could shoot at a bad guy and hit an innocent bystander. They could interfere with law enforcement. They could be mistaken by law enforcement to be the assailant."

He added, "This bill is nothing but a ploy to short-circuit reasonable efforts to keep weapons out of the wrong hands."

Other bishops shared similar experiences of gun violence, in some cases, young people being shot. Bishop Erik Gronberg of the Northern Texas-Louisiana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, who also spoke against the bill, said the gunman who came to El Paso was from the metroplex where he lives.



Other religious leaders also spoke out against the legislation.

"Let's create safe places for our children. And let's stop sending thoughts and prayers after they are dead," said Rabbi David Lyon of Congregation Beth Israel in Houston. He referenced a shooting in 2018 in Santa Fe, Texas, when an armed man shot high school students.

They also said more than 6,000 gun owners who had their licenses denied, revoked or suspended would immediately be able to carry a handgun if H.B. 1927 becomes law.

The religious leaders said they have been speaking to legislators to make them aware of where they stand.

Seitz said he has spoken with state Rep. Claudia Ordaz Perez, D-El Paso, who is opposed to the legislation.