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## **State's Catholic bishops support background checks for gun sales**

***Statement supporting Initiative 594 says some limits are reasonable, urges increased access to mental health services***

(SEATTLE) In a joint statement the Catholic bishops of Washington state said requiring – background checks on all firearm sales represents “a prudent balance between concerns for personal liberty and public safety.”

The [statement](#) in support of Initiative 594 said that as pastoral leaders the bishops could not ignore threats to public safety that arise when guns are too easily accessible.

State and federal laws require gun dealers to have licenses and, in most cases, conduct background checks on gun buyers. Initiative 594 would require background checks on the sale or transfer of all firearms and adds background checks for online sales and sales at gun shows.

The measure includes an exemption for antique firearms.

“In addition to this initiative measure, we also urge support by public and elected officials for policy initiatives to improve access to mental health care for those who may be prone to violence,” the statement said.

The bishops said the prevalence of mass shootings “reflect a devaluing of human life in our nation” and that as pastoral leaders they have a particular responsibility to participate in efforts that reduce violence.

As part of those efforts the bishops laid out principles for reducing gun violence including measures that make guns safer, place curbs on easy access to deadly weapons such as assault rifles as well as “a serious commitment to confront the pervasive role of addiction and mental illness in crime.”

Initiative 594 is an initiative to the Legislature, which may be approved by state lawmakers or sent to voters as written. Legislators could also modify the initiative and send it and the original text of the measure to the ballot.

The Catholic Bishops of Washington State are: Archbishop J. Peter Sartain of the Archdiocese of Seattle; Bishop Blase J. Cupich of the Diocese of Spokane; Bishop Joseph J. Tyson of the Diocese of Yakima; and Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

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