

# No, Governor, Rights Are NOT Government-Issued Privileges That You Can Suspend

On Friday, September 8, Michelle Lujan Grisham, the governor of New Mexico, announced a new [public health order](#) suspending the right to carry firearms in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County for at least thirty days.

The New Mexico governor announced the thirty-day suspension at a [press conference](#). Citing the shooting deaths of three children in Albuquerque this summer, Grisham declared “a public health emergency,” which she says gives her the authority to suspend the right to carry firearms in the surrounding county for thirty days.

In front of reporters, Grisham was quick to acknowledge some obvious problems with the order. She admits that the order will not have much of an effect on the level of gun violence in Albuquerque. She instead stressed the symbolism of the measure.

When asked if she really thought that criminals—like those who committed the shootings she cited—would comply and not carry a gun in Albuquerque, Governor Grisham said that she didn’t but thought the motion was a “pretty resounding message.”

Grisham also repeatedly said she expected the motion to be challenged in court. Her demeanor suggested that the entire purpose of the executive order was to spur a legal fight. The governor spent much of the press conference pontificating about a constitutional right to be safe and presented the Second Amendment as incompatible with that right.

Grisham is distorting how rights work to justify her program. She frames rights as a handful of unrelated positive freedoms

granted to citizens by the government, which can revoke them during emergencies or when they conflict with rights that government officials deem more important.

In reality, rights are derived from self-ownership. We alone have the highest claim to our own bodies. That right is absolute, so any aggression against our bodies is a rights violation that can be justly resisted or punished proportionately.

And from self-ownership, we can derive the just ownership of property. Self-ownership gives you the highest claim to the fruits of your labor. Unowned resources can justly become owned through [homesteading](#)—mixing your labor with unowned natural resources. Once these resources are owned, they can be justly transferred as gifts or through voluntary exchange. Because they are derived from self-ownership, property rights are absolute, meaning any violation can be justly resisted or punished proportionately.

We can see, then, that the right not to be harmed and the right to own property do not conflict—they are variations of the same fundamental right. This is especially evident when the property in question equips us to better protect ourselves and our other property. That's the case with firearms. The debate Grisham calls for is built on a lie.

The governor is trying to account for the government's failures to protect people, a service it monopolizes, by violating the property rights of Bernalillo County citizens. She understands this is probably illegal and at the press conference even called herself courageous for moving ahead anyway. Even though, unlike the rest of us outside of government, she wouldn't face consequences if it were determined that what she's doing is illegal. She'd, at most, be told to stop.

Or so she thought. Instead, over the weekend, the gun owners

of Bernalillo County [took to the streets](#), carrying their weapons peacefully in protest. And the Albuquerque police chief and Bernalillo County sheriff [issued statements](#) saying they would not enforce the governor's order. Because it violates the rights of citizens and draws resources away from preventing real crimes.

That's real courage.

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