

FORWARDINDIANA

Indiana clergy call for special session to repeal HB 1296

Group of Indiana clergy

Guest columnists

On March 21, Gov. Eric Holcomb signed HB 1296 into law which eliminates Indiana's handgun permit requirement. As of July 1, Indiana residents 18 years or older will not be required to obtain a permit to carry a gun in public.

Law enforcement officials from the Fraternal Order of Police, police chiefs' association, and county prosecutors' association have all spoken out against the bill that eliminates Indiana's handgun permit requirement. State Police Superintendent Doug Carter, former sheriff of Hamilton County, strongly criticized this bill during a WTHR interview Feb. 24.

"It's often so easy to talk about your support for public safety," Carter said. "But if you choose to support this bill, you will not be supporting us." Police will not have the protection of the carry license procedure to help keep guns out of the hands of those who should not be carrying a concealed gun due to their violations of state or federal laws.

This reckless action takes affect during a time when gun violence continues to surge around the country. From mass shootings in schools, congregations and grocery stores to the rising toll of gun violence in streets and neighborhoods, we

have a moral and ethical obligation to protect the sanctity of life and enact laws that will curb this type of debilitating violence, not increase it.

Indiana has not escaped the horrific effects of gun violence. At least 13 people were shot and eight were killed during the mass shooting at the Indianapolis FedEx facility in April 2021. That same year, Indianapolis saw its highest homicide rate ever with 271 killings, mostly committed with firearms. In 2020, firearms surpassed car accidents and became leading cause of death for children and teens.

Gun violence is a public health crisis that demands a corrective legislative response. We implore our elected officials to enact legislation that would keep our residents safer from gun violence rather than more vulnerable. We put our children in harm's way when we ease sensible restrictions on access to guns. Assault weapons, which are designed to kill large numbers of people quickly, are legal in Indiana. There are no limits on magazine capacity for these weapons of war.

As leaders of mainline Christian denominations and Christian Theological Seminary, our faith in God and concern for humanity compels us to stand strongly against the relaxed laws that

enable the rising gun violence in our country, state and city. We all have a role to play in curbing gun violence — faith communities, businesses, families and elected officials; however, we must begin with the unfettered access to these weapons that are wreaking havoc in our country. America has become an exception in the world in gun violence — a preventable disease that has metastasized into every facet of our shared lives.

We call on Gov. Holcomb to convene a special legislative session to address the rising tide of gun violence and repeal HB 1296. Additionally, we implore all our U.S. Congressional and Senate representatives to author or support federal legislation that will substantively address the national gun violence crisis.

Now is the time to take action to correct the laws that enable the rising tide of gun violence. Tomorrow may be too late.

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