

# Prepaid Phones May Be Harder To Get If Texas Senator Gets His Way

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**EL PASO, Texas** -- No credit check, no ID, and no contract sounds like a good deal. The problem is gangs are taking advantage of inexpensive and untraceable phones to arrange hits and drug deals. Rob Gallardo is a spokesperson for Operation No Gangs. He said, "Not only are international gangs using them they are used in El Paso and Anthony. Groups will buy them for conducting a specific mission. We have heard them used for kids to harass others. Many of the gangs in the area use them to conduct drug deals or illegal activity. So using the phone gives them anonymity."

Thursday a Texas senator proposed a bill that would put restrictions on who is allowed to buy prepaid phones. If the bill were to pass, a government issued ID would be needed to make the purchase, and it would then be the retailers responsibility to keep track of the data.

Randy Ponce sells prepaid phones. He said keeping track of who buys what is not going to be an easy task.

"There could be an easier way to do it. I'm not sure. I guess we don't have all the details yet," Ponce said.

Cricket officials who also sell prepaid phones said the company does its own policing and their intent is to provide access not anonymity. The company attempts to validate IDs and limit the number of phones any one person can buy.

Both retailers and anti-gang groups said the issue can be a sensitive one and legislators must proceed with caution.

"I think it is a step in the right direction, but it has gotta be packaged just right so that people who want to use the phones legitimately are not affected by it," Gallardo said.