

For Immediate Release
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Florida Sen. Perry E. Thurston Jr.'s Statement Regarding Comments from Vocal Elements of the Parkland Commission

Statements Regarding the Commission's Role in Removing Former Sheriff Scott Israel Demand Clarification, Not an Apology

FORT LAUDERDALE – Today's Sun Sentinel article regarding my take on the Parkland Commission's views on former Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel demands clarification in response to the unmitigated attack by the strident voices on the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission.

I have been asked to apologize for my statements regarding commission discussions stemming from the recent debate and vote in the Florida Senate regarding Israel's reinstatement or removal. Suffice it to say, I wouldn't hold my breath.

The Commission did discuss the removal of Israel, but they didn't vote to remove him due to the clear evidence against any decision to remove Israel from his job. It's a position that apparently Commission Chair Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri held and still believes as he continues to question the governor's decision to suspend Israel.

Last December, in an interview with WTVJ-TV, Gualtieri said he saw no cause for Gov. Ron DeSantis to suspend Israel for incompetence, malfeasance or neglect of duty. "There are some things that everyone can learn from, but I don't see anything that rises to that level or even close to that level," he said at the time.

Unfortunately, vocal elements on the commission and within the Parkland community continue to attack anyone who disagrees with their pencil-thin point-of-view. Keith Koenig, the co-founder of City Furniture, Robert Runcie, Superintendent of Broward Public Schools, Israel and now senators attempting to perform their duties – these individuals deserve far better than the disparaging comments coming out of Parkland.

No one in the Broward County community, including me, is unmindful of the tragedy that took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. However, the horrific loss of loved ones shouldn't permit unbridled attacks on anyone who holds a different position or point of view. We should be able to disagree without being disagreeable.

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