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P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13th, 2018

The Time to Protect our Children is Now

Security Protocol At MCHS Must Be Implemented

We cannot wait any longer to secure our high school. I'm not going to wait for another tragedy to make known what I feel needs to be done. I've talked to mothers, fathers, teachers and members of the community. I've had mothers and fathers in my office with their kids. They were all asking me to help. I've talked to the families of victims who reached out to me. Their fears and anxieties became all too familiar as we spoke.

Our Sheriff is waiting on grants to hire deputies. No matter what he says, these deputies can be pulled off their job at the school to respond to any call in the county. This would leave the students inadequately protected at any given time. It should also be noted that these grants leave Superintendent Lovett waiting on the Sheriff. Even if approved, these monies could take a long time to get here.

I've had conversations with law enforcement and Homeland Security, I've talked to other schools about their security protocols, I've met with Superintendent Lovett and Sheriff Byers, I've spent 16 years in law enforcement and I served 20 years in the Marines. I helped develop the "active shooter" plan at the Paducah Police Department. I've trained many officers with the plan.

My Security Plan For Marshall County High School Is Threefold:

- Six school resource officers should be hired (not deputies). These men and women will be retired police officers or military that all retired honorably and will meet the criterion of our state's Special Law Enforcement Officer (SLEO). They'll receive the same training as your typical deputy, and they save money for the school system. They're also controlled by the school and can't be pulled from the school to answer a call on the street like deputies could. Four of the officers will always remain at the high school since history has proven high schools are at greater risk and due to the size of the campus. The other two officers will spend most of their time at our two middle schools while occasionally visiting our elementary schools. I will form a board to assist Superintendent Lovett in hiring these officers.
- Parents that I have spoken with have overwhelmingly requested metal detectors. There should be two entry points at the high school. One point would be too slow. Each one will be fitted with x-ray technology and metal detectors. All six resource officers will be trained to use this technology. Some teachers and staff will also receive training for days that an officer is out. One officer will cover the outside section of the students in line and the other will man the x-ray and metal detector.
- Over the past year, I have been looking for potential new homes for the Sheriff's Department. After doing some research, I feel strongly that building a new Sheriff's Department on the Marshall County High School campus would be a significant deterrent to a potential shooter or anyone looking to harm our students. This location not only offers rapid response to Marshall County High School but also increases response time to Christian Fellowship, Central Elementary and North Marshall Middle. Officers can walk the campus during allotted times, increasing the security presence in and outside of school facilities. Criminals could be processed at the Judicial Building to relieve fears of them being a potential threat to the school. Sheriff Byers and Superintendent Lovett responded positively to this proposal when I sat down with each of them.

I'm convinced that any perceived notion of time that some seem to think we have is nothing more than hopeful thinking. As most of you know, eight students have been arrested for terroristic threatening since the shooting. Waiting and hoping isn't the answer.

Let's talk about funding for a moment. I understand that renovation projects to schools can be important. However, they're not more important than the lives of our students. Expansion projects are still moving forward in the school system. Some are needed renovations that will make the high school more secure. Others are not a must. 13.3 million will be spent at the high school and Sharpe Elementary. Does it really have to be asked? What's more important? The 1300+ students or the renovations? It's shouldn't even be a question. If money is truly an issue to pay for security, then those projects should be shelved for now. 13.3 million dollars would pay six resource officers, hired at \$50,000 each (salary and insurance) a year, for 33 years.

Stop this waiting game. Put this plan in place. Put any strong plan in place. Teachers shouldn't have to dig through student's bags. They're not trained for security detail. Just decide today to get our students, teachers and staff protected! This tragedy can happen again. We must not try to convince ourselves otherwise. Fortunately, we can dramatically decrease the chances. The time is now.

Sincerely-

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judge Neal', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Judge Neal