**Victor A. Pitman**

**Candidate for Callaway County Sheriff**

**March 19, 2024**

This statement is in response to a request for my comments concerning the revocation of the former sheriff’s peace officer license by the state of Missouri announced today. As a candidate running for the officer of Callaway County Sheriff, it is my responsibility to answer a legitimate question concerning my candidacy for the office. I was asked if I think it will affect the public’s perception of the Callaway County Sheriff’s Office, and as someone running for the position is there anything I would do if elected to try and boost the office’s reputation.

Accepting the role of a peace officer in our society is a noble calling and serious responsibility. In our state and country, the government is granted its authority by the people to exist through the United States Constitution and Constitution of the State of Missouri. Fellow citizens are then elected and appointed with the trust to serve the citizens and carry out the business of the people. Including peace officers. Anytime one of our elected or appointed “public servants” ethically or criminally fails to uphold the standards of their office, they have forfeited the honor of remaining a public servant. That is the unfortunate situation we find ourselves in today.

 Any time this occurs it can and does erode the public’s trust in our government, this is especially true when it involves law enforcement. Yes, I am sure this situation has affected the public’s perception of not just the Callaway County Sheriff’s Office, but law enforcement as a whole. This is especially true when that person is the leader of a law enforcement agency such as an elected sheriff.

As a 40-year law enforcement veteran, I am proud of the service my chosen profession has provided the citizens. Statistics tell us that more than 99% of peace officers are honest, ethical public servants. They are members of our own community who decide to serve and protect their family and neighbors from those who would pray upon them. I know the negative perception of law enforcement is greater because of even one situation. I would, however, like to state that the Callaway County Sheriff’s Office is comprised of over 70 people. The vast majority of which are hardworking, ethical public servants and the people of Callaway County should be proud of the service they have and continue to provide.

With that being said, the public not only has the right to expect, but should demand that its public servants be held accountable. As peace officers, we should demand the same of ourselves and our fellow law enforcement professionals. I believe that even though this specific situation reflects negatively, ultimately it is an example of the systems put in place to hold our elected and appointed public servants accountable has ultimately worked as it should.

As a law enforcement executive and trainer over the years, I have discovered that the best way to earn the public’s trust is through providing service to the public in the most open, transparent, and ethical manner possible. To communicate with the public and operate the sheriff’s office as a member of the community, not an adversary to the community. Press releases and social media engagements are great, but the greatest impact is the trust earned with every individual contact the members of the office have with the public they are sworn to serve. I will strive to set an atmosphere of openness, respect, polite, professional service with every individual contact the sheriff’s office has with every individual in the community.