

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
JIMMY PATRONIS'

WEEKLY RUNDOWN

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

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Dear Fellow Floridians:

I traveled to Broward County last week shortly after the Parkland massacre and met with some of the victims, their families and many others. My heart breaks for those who were gunned down by this mad man. It is a loss that will torment the families for the rest of their lives. While on the ground I also met with first responders who were on the scene, including the Coral Springs Parkland Fire Chief Frank Babinec. They spoke candidly about their experiences and the haunting images from that horrific day.

It's been my top priority to fight for first responders to have access to mental health care because they are on the front line of defense. Lives were saved in Parkland because of these brave men and women, but who are on the front lines for them? As increasing mental health care treatment is discussed, we can't forget the very real needs our first responders have as they struggle to deal with the mental toll of their job. Our first responders serve us every day without hesitation or questioning our politics. We've seen this time and time again, and now with the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. I fully support increased mental health screening, counseling, and training, but it would be shameful if our first responders were forgotten in this conversation. It's time Florida shows up for them.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Patronis
Chief Financial Officer
State of Florida

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OPINION: Mental health for first responders cannot be forgotten

By Jimmy Patronis, South Florida Sun-Sentinel, February 21, 2018

The conversations I had with the victims and first responders in the wake of last week's shooting in Parkland still haunt me. My heart breaks for those who were gunned down by this mad man. It is a loss that will torment the families for the rest of their lives. It will torment all those who witnessed this horrific tragedy.

I traveled to Broward County last week and met with first responders who were on the scene, including the Coral Springs Parkland Fire Chief Frank Babinec. They spoke candidly about their experiences. In some cases, there were kids pulling out kids.

It's been my biggest priority to ensure first responders have access to mental health care because they are on the front line of defense. Lives were saved in Parkland because of these brave men and women, but who are on the front lines for them?

After seeking help for the demons haunting him during his 30-year career, Steve LaDue, a Tampa firefighter, took his own life in September of last year. He sought help, but because Florida's workers' compensation system does not cover mental health unless accompanied by a physical injury, his claim was denied and he was required to pay for the treatment he already had received.

Steve LaDue is now part of the sad statistics that plague this profession.

A 2015 Florida State University study found that 15.5 percent of firefighters reported having made at least one suicide attempt during their time in fire service, compared to approximately 2 percent of the U.S. adult population. Forty-six percent of firefighters reported having thought about suicide, compared to approximately 5 percent of the U.S. adult population. These are shocking percentages. For our first responders, treatment is literally a matter of life and death.

As we discuss increasing mental health care treatment, we can't overlook the very real needs our first responders have as they struggle to deal with the immense psychological and emotional toll of their job. First responders witness horrific crimes and encounter dangerous conditions because it is their job. They work each day to make sure we don't end up as another sad statistic. Last year, four states, including Texas, approved measures that increase access to mental health benefits for first responders, with three of those states doing it through the workers' compensation system. This year I want to add Florida to that list.

We continue to hear horrific stories about loss of life, and the impact on our first responders, that reverberate throughout our communities in Florida: Orlando police officer Gerry Realin, who removed bodies after the Pulse nightclub shooting on June 12, 2016; and David Dangerfield, a battalion chief for Indian River County who committed suicide in October 2016 after a 27-year career. What stories will we hear from our first responder community after Parkland? How many more cries for help will we need to hear before Florida acts?

Our first responders serve us every day without hesitation or questioning our politics. They don't care who you voted for in the last election, only about helping you, your family, and their community during critical and vulnerable times. We've seen this time and time again, and now with the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

I fully support increased mental health screening, counseling, and training, but it would be shameful if our first responders were forgotten about in this conversation. First responders show up for us. It's time Florida shows up for them.

Jimmy Patronis is Florida's chief financial officer and state fire marshal.

News of Interest

Sun-Sentinel: [**OPINION: Mental health for first responders cannot be forgotten**](#)

WFLA Tampa Bay Radio: [**CFO Patronis Discusses Parkland Shooting and First Responder Mental Health Awareness**](#)

Daytona Beach News Journal: [**Editorial: First responders need mental health support**](#)

Orlando Sentinel/Sun Sentinel: [**Florida plans to boost Israel Bond holdings to a record \\$50 million**](#)

UHealth: [**Florida CFO Jimmy Patronis tours Sylvester, praises Firefighters Cancer Initiative**](#)

Tampa Bay Times: [**A rattled Florida Legislature concedes it should do more to address mental health after Parkland school shooting**](#)

Miami Herald: [**South Florida firefighters and researchers unite to fight an invisible killer**](#)

CFO Jimmy Patronis Increases Investment in Israel to Unprecedented Amount

Florida to Hold \$50 Million in Israel Bonds in 2018

Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis announced last week an increase in Florida's investment in Israel Bonds by \$10 million in 2018, increasing the state's holdings to an unprecedented \$50 million. The decision comes after discussions with Israel's Finance Minister, Moshe Kahlon, and representatives, including the president of Israel Bonds. Florida is the third largest U.S. state investor in the State of Israel.

"During a time when our nation is criticized and attacked for moving our embassy to Jerusalem, it's incredibly important to signal to the world that we stand firmly with the State of Israel," said CFO Patronis.

"Israel's economy has seen significant growth over the years including expanded development in the high-tech industry. Increasing our investment in Israel by \$10 million this year not only provides a good return on investment, but strengthens our relationship. The interests of Israel will always be the interests of the United States, and this unprecedented investment further cements us as friends, allies, and economic partners."

"With a commitment to innovation and cutting edge technology, the State of Israel's economy is vibrant and growing," said Moshe Kahlon, Finance Minister of Israel. "Investment in Israel Bonds is an investment in Israel. It tells to the world that Florida and Israel are not only friends, but have shared economic interests. I'm grateful for CFO Jimmy Patronis' leadership and commitment to the relationship forged between our great nations."

"Israel Bonds is thrilled to deepen our partnership with the State of Florida," said Israel Maimon, President of Israel Bonds. "We are proud to work with CFO Jimmy Patronis to increase Florida's investment. Investing in Israel Bonds supports Israel's economy, helping to keep it strong and resilient."

The State of Florida, through the Department of Financial Services (DFS) Division of Treasury, currently holds \$40 million in Israel Bonds.

Fighting for Florida Consumers

One of the duties of CFO Jimmy Patronis' Division of Investigative and Forensic Services (DIFS) includes monitoring and auditing disability payments. CFO Patronis' Bureau of Monitoring and Audit, Permanent Total Disability Unit works tirelessly to ensure Floridians receive benefits owed to them.

Just last month, the CFO's office discovered that an injured worker was not receiving their Permanent Total Supplemental Benefits from a previous accident. After proactive intervention with the insurance carrier, a check was issued to the injured worker totaling \$631,868, which includes the underpaid amount of \$229,879, interest of \$349,540 and penalties of \$47,447. Another estimated \$150,000 is due to the worker to bring this issue current. This is another way CFO Patronis' office and the men and women within DIFS are working diligently to protect Florida consumers.

Florida Economic Briefs

U.S. Retail Sales Down in January

The U.S. Census Bureau announced retail and food service sales for January were down .3 percent compared to December; however, they were up 3.6 percent from January 2017. Automotive sales (down 1.2 percent) were one of the driving factors for the monthly decrease.

Source: **U.S. Census Bureau**

U.S. Building Permits and Housing Starts up in January

The U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development announced building permits and housing starts increased in January (up 7.4 percent and 9.7 percent respectively) compared to December. Comparing January 2018 to January 2017, building permits and housing starts were up 7.4 percent and 7.3 percent respectively.

Source: **U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development**