

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 26, 2008

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CFO speaks at Housing Day Rally at Capitol

Call to Florida Legislature to Stimulate Florida's Economy by Using Housing Trust Fund Monies for Housing

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Florida lawmakers, people in need of affordable housing, and members of the Sadowski Workforce Housing Coalition, gathered on the steps of the Capitol Wednesday to call on the Legislature to use Florida's housing trust fund money for housing.

The Sadowski Workforce Housing Coalition is a diverse alliance of 25 statewide groups ranging from low income advocates and religious organizations to government and business. There is probably no other single issue that these groups would align on—they represent every conceivable constituency and with one voice they urge that the monies in the state and local housing trust funds be used for housing and that the cap on the trust funds be lifted.

Chief Financial Officer, Alex Sink joined with Associated Industries of Florida, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Florida Retail Federation, the Florida Home Builders, and the Florida Realtors to urge the Florida Legislature to use all the monies in the state and local housing trust funds for their intended purpose: affordable housing. "Affordable housing programs are an investment in our future," said Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink. "These tax dollars help create jobs, stimulate local economies, and assist Floridians in realizing the American Dream of home ownership."

"AIF has a particular interest in this appropriation at this time of economic downturn in Florida," said Barney Bishop, President and CEO of Associated Industries of Florida. "We are promoting an economic stimulus package for the state and affordable housing is a key part of that package."

"A powerful group of business interests delivered a unified message at the Capitol today – using the monies in the trust funds, which are approximately \$590 million -would provide a \$6 billion dollar economic stimulus to the state," said Jaimie Ross, Affordable Housing Director, 1000 Friends of Florida; President, Florida Housing Coalition; facilitator of the Sadowski Workforce Housing Coalition.

Lawmakers have capped the trust funds and with the repeal of the cap not expected to pass in the 2008 session, Florida will never again have the money to put into housing that it has now. Florida has a one-time opportunity to jumpstart its economy with the monies from the Florida state and local housing trust funds. Rally participants are calling on the legislature to refrain from raiding the housing trust funds to fill budget deficits.

“The Florida Home Builders Association like other business organizations, recognize the budget challenges that lawmakers’ face this session,” said David Hart, Vice President of Governmental and Legislative Affairs, Florida Home Builders Association. “No doubt there will be great pressure to look at sweeping money out of the Trust Funds to help balance the budget. We urge the Legislature to reject this course.”

Frank Ortis, President of Florida League of Cities agrees. “It is amazing to me that Local Governments are still expected to meet housing needs in 2008 with less money than we received in 2002,” Ortis said. “Now is the right time to get more money, not fewer dollars.”

Charles Milsted, Associate State Director of AARP, representing nearly 3 million members, also advocates for the Legislature to allocate the funds in the state and local housing trust funds to be used only for housing. “Today, Florida is at risk of becoming a place where people want to move from,” Milsted said. “We have the funding mechanisms in place to support a robust affordable-housing initiative. What we lack is the ability to see these programs as what they are – a sound and wise investment in the future. The investment will not only help the citizens of Florida who in need of affordable housing but provide a boost for our economy as well.”

Chuck Bonfiglio, President of Florida Association of Realtors explained that the last general tax increase that Florida has seen was in 1992 expressly for the purpose of providing affordable housing. “While we’ve seen a dip in the housing market, the needs in our state are still very real,” Bonfiglio said. “The Florida Association of Realtors strongly urges the Legislature to fully fund the Sadowski Trust Funds and spend the money – that was dedicated for housing – on our critical housing needs.”

For more information contact Jaimie Ross, Affordable Housing Director, 1000 Friends of Florida, President, Florida Housing Coalition, and Facilitator of the Sadowski Workforce Housing Coalition. jaimieross@aol.com or call 850.212.0587.