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OP-ED

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Florida has means to provide homes to those in need

HIGHLIGHTS

State leads nation lack of affordable rentals

Sadowski trust funds available for housing

Legislatures should approve \$324 million appropriation



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SadowskiCoalition.org

Florida leads the nation in bad and good news about affordable housing. It has become the nation's toughest state for renters, with California and New York close behind.

According to the recently released Make Room report by Enterprise Community Partners, Florida has the largest share of renters — 31 percent — who spend more than half of their income on housing. South Florida is faring the worst, with 36 percent of renters who spend more than half their income on rent.

In October, the Miami CBS affiliate reported that hundreds of seniors arrived days in advance and slept in their cars just to get on a waiting list for a chance to apply for an affordable place to live when St. Dominic Catholic Church announced it was taking applications for 200 units for low-income seniors.

South Florida is not alone. According to the 2015 Florida Home Matters Report, more than 920,000 very low-income households, including



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hardworking families, the elderly, veterans and disabled Floridians on fixed incomes, have to spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing. They are one missed paycheck or one unexpected crisis away from homelessness. Florida also has the nation's third-largest homeless population.

That is all very bad news. But, Florida has good news, too.

Florida has the Sadowski State and Local Housing trust funds, a dedicated revenue source that funds affordable-housing programs and is the envy of the nation. With the increase in housing prices comes an increase in the amount of money available for appropriation for Florida's housing programs. The Legislature has the opportunity to appropriate almost \$324 million for the state and local housing trust funds during this 2016 legislative session.

The appropriation will create more than 32,000 jobs and more than \$4.6 billion in positive economic impact. Miami-Dade County will receive more than \$19 million in trust fund allocations, resulting in more than \$293 million in positive economic impact, more than 5,100 people housed and more than 2,000 jobs created.

The Sadowski Coalition is a collaboration of more than 30 diverse statewide organizations, including business interests, such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce; industry groups, such as the Florida Realtors and Florida Home Builders Association; faith-based organizations, such as Florida Catholic Conference, Habitat for Humanity of Florida and Florida Impact; advocates for the elderly and special needs populations, such as Florida AARP, LeadingAge Florida, Florida Arc, Florida United Way and Florida Legal Services.

All these constituencies work together for a single purpose — to ask the Florida Legislature to use all the housing trust fund money for housing. That means no diversion or sweeping of those monies for other purposes.

Florida has the best model for funding and producing affordable housing in the nation. The Florida Legislature has the opportunity to make the most of that now. It's time to use Florida's housing trust funds for the benefit of Floridians in need of a home; hardworking families, the elderly, veterans and disabled Floridians living on fixed incomes.

Florida cannot afford to miss this opportunity. Home matters.

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