

FROM THE EDITOR >



BY JAIMIE ROSS

Once the recession started in Florida (December, 2007), we saw the total sweep of the housing trust funds into general revenue. The Florida Legislature had to pass a balanced budget and scrambled to find revenue wherever it could. The state and local

housing trust funds were turned into slush funds: money which was raised from an increase in the documentary stamp tax for the purpose of funding state and local housing programs was drained for unrelated purposes.

Housing advocates knew this was an unwise move by the Legislature because sweeping the housing trust funds exacerbated the economic recession at a time those monies would have lifted up the economy had they been used for housing. But the political reality was that in a “no new taxes” environment and a constitutional obligation to pass a balanced budget, the Legislature had a reasonable excuse for the sweeps.

In the 2014 Session there is no excuse for sweeping one penny of the state and local housing trust funds. No excuse. The Coalition of business groups, low income advocates, and religious organizations known as the Sadowski Coalition uniformly call upon the legislature to use all the housing trust funds for housing.



At the Sadowski Coalition press conference held immediately before the start of session, **Phyllis Moore, the SHIP Administrator for Gadsden County** shared the stories of Floridian’s in desperate need whom she was able to

help when SHIP was funded: a husband 90 years of age and his wife, 87, who had no running water or heat in their home; the hard working 18-wheeler truck driver who needed retrofits to his home after he became a

quadriplegic following a misstep from his truck; and the young woman who she helped with credit counseling until she was able to qualify to purchase her first home.



Florida Home Builder Association president, Ron Lieberman said “the home building industry offers good-paying jobs that can’t be outsourced. There’s plenty of work to do to upgrade our housing stock, and plenty of people who

still need jobs. We hire construction workers, carpenters, electricians, bricklayers, and many other skilled workers. We buy lumber, concrete, and other supplies from local businesses, and they in turn hire more workers to keep up with the demand. When we put local people to work, they spend their wages at local businesses, like restaurants and retail outlets. Right now, on the cusp of economic recovery, is the perfect time to keep the momentum going by using the housing trust funds for housing.”



“Ultimately, the strength of Florida’s economy comes from its workforce,” said **Leticia Adams, director of infrastructure and governance policy for the Florida Chamber of Commerce.** “If our workforce at all income levels can find a

safe and affordable place to live near their places of employment, Florida will retain its competitive edge going forward. For all these reasons, we believe there is an urgent need to use all the state and local housing trust funds for housing. Investing in Florida’s affordable housing will go a long way to shape the economic prosperity of our state and all Floridians.”



Susan Pourciau, speaking on behalf of the Florida Coalition for the Homeless said “The more money that is swept from SHIP, the more money is swept from the homeless – I urge the legislature to appropriate all the SHIP monies for SHIP. The SHIP program itself has been used to build

and rehab permanent supportive housing for the homeless – now it may be able to provide additional monies directly to the Continuums of Care under SB 1090 filed by Senator Latvala – money that is sorely needed to address the crisis of homelessness in Florida.”



Trey Price, speaking on behalf of the Florida Realtors said “The main housing trust fund program, SHIP, has been used at the local level for everything, from preventing homelessness to helping thousands of Floridians get into sustainable first time homeownership; we have seen

the SHIP funds swept for many years when the state was in economic recession and the legislature was looking everywhere for funds to balance the budget. But, this year is different. There is no budget deficit and we have an enormous need for affordable housing throughout the state.”

The people of Florida want the housing trust funds to be used for housing. The people of Florida need the housing trust funds to be used for housing. In this edition of the Housing News Network Journal we have testimonials from all across Florida on the need for SHIP funding- the good that SHIP has done and the waiting lists of Floridians in dire need of assistance that has for too long been denied; assistance that need not be denied in 2014. SHIP is a tried and true program that is distributed throughout the state based on population, used to meet local needs, and has a track record of performance, transparency, and accountability. It's time for no more excuses: all the housing trust funds should be used for housing. [HNN](#)

THE CALL UPON THE LEGISLATURE TO USE ALL THE HOUSING TRUST FUNDS FOR HOUSING CAME FROM THE 26 STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS THAT COMPRISE THE SADOWSKI COALITION:

BUSINESS/INDUSTRY GROUPS

- Associated Industries of Florida
- Coalition of Affordable Housing Providers
- Florida Realtors
- Florida Bankers Association
- Florida Chamber of Commerce
- Florida Home Builders Association
- Florida Manufactured Housing Association
- Florida Retail Federation
- Florida Green Building Association

ADVOCATES FOR THE ELDERLY

- AARP of Florida
- LeadingAge Florida

GOVERNMENT

- Florida Association of Counties
- Florida Association of Local Housing Finance Authorities
- Florida Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials
- Florida League of Cities
- Florida Regional Councils Association

SOCIAL SERVICES/LOW INCOME HOUSING ADVOCATES

- Florida Legal Services
- Florida Coalition for the Homeless
- Florida Housing Coalition
- Florida Supportive Housing Coalition
- United Way of Florida

PLANNING/GROWTH MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- 1000 Friends of Florida
- Florida Chapter of American Planning Association

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

- Florida Catholic Conference
- Florida Impact
- Habitat for Humanity of Florida

WE OWE SPECIAL GRATITUDE TO SENATOR BILL MONTFORD FOR KICKING OFF THE PRESS CONFERENCE AND THE FLORIDA SENATE FOR ITS EXPRESSION OF INTENT TO USE ALL THE HOUSING TRUST FUND MONIES FOR HOUSING SO EARLY IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. WE URGE THE HOUSE TO DO THE SAME.