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# Florida affordable-housing money in groups' sights

By **News Service of Florida**

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A coalition of industry and nonprofit groups Thursday made what has become an annual case for state lawmakers to reject Gov. Rick Scott's efforts to divert money from housing programs to balance the state budget.

The Sadowski Housing Coalition, with members ranging from the Florida Coalition for the Homeless to Habitat for Humanity, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Home Builders Association, held a news conference Thursday and called for lawmakers to allocate state and local housing trust-fund money to affordable housing programs.

"Fully funding affordable housing goes a long way toward enhancing our state's workforce and business climate," said Brewster Bevis, senior vice president of the business lobbying group Associated Industries of Florida.

"If we can ensure that Florida's employees, at all income levels, can find a safe and reliable affordable home near their job, our state can continue to be one of the best places to do business."

The 2017 legislative session begins Tuesday. The coalition wants lawmakers to appropriate about \$293.4 million for housing programs.

In his \$83.5 billion budget proposal, Scott recommended shifting about two-thirds of the money out of a trust fund earmarked for low-income housing.

The trust fund receives a portion of money produced by real estate documentary stamp taxes.

"These funds help Floridians of modest means to find rental and homeownership opportunities," said Carrie O'Rourke, vice president of public policy for the Florida Realtors. "Those could be in the form of affordable housing, affordable apartments, down payment assistance to purchase a home or even money to repair a home."

Last year, state lawmakers kept \$200 million for housing programs after Scott requested about \$237.5 million be moved out of the affordable housing trust fund.

A year earlier, lawmakers allocated for the housing programs \$175 million of the \$255 million that went into the housing trust fund.