

# EDITORIAL: DeSantis should protect program to produce affordable housing, jobs

By: Times Union Editorial Board | Florida Times Union  
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It's bizarre, but there are actually good programs that the Florida Legislature fails to fully fund and embrace — even though these initiatives are effective, have bipartisan support and promote collaboration between business, government and nonprofits.

One example is the Sadowski Fund, a trust fund designed to provide money for affordable housing that the free market will not support. The reality is that private developers cannot make affordable housing projects meet their profit goals without government incentives.

The need for affordable housing is great: more than 911,000 very low-income Floridians pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing. They are one missed paycheck away from homelessness, and Florida already has the nation's third-largest homeless population.

## **Well-designed housing incentives**

The Sadowski Fund sets the groundwork for more affordable housing by creating incentives through documentary stamp fees on home purchases.

The design is brilliant: when housing prices go up, so does documentary stamp revenue to support affordable housing.

The impact is great: every dollar from the trust fund produces \$4 to \$6 in private funding. If it was fully utilized, the Sadowski program would produce 30,000 jobs and \$4 billion in economic impact.

## **Legislature shortchanging the fund**

The problem is that the Legislature consistently sweeps much of the Sadowski revenue into the general fund, thus stifling affordable housing for Floridians — not to mention the business and job growth that is spurred by the program.

Gov. Ron DeSantis said he supports using all of the trust fund money for housing. But the Legislature had other (bad) ideas: it swept the largest portion of the Sadowski revenue — \$125 million — into the general fund.

The Legislature devoted another \$115 million of the revenue toward Hurricane Michael recovery in the Panhandle, which is a legitimate allocation.

But it's just plain wrong that the smallest portion of the Sadowski revenue — \$85 million — is actually going toward supporting affordable housing in Florida.

The Sadowski Coalition has asked that the \$125 million be returned from the general fund and diverted to where it belongs: affordable housing. And fortunately that's something that can be done through a line-item veto by DeSantis.

DeSantis has shown that he has plenty of courage to do the right thing. He should do the right thing in this case by using his line-item veto power to restore the \$125 million to the Sadowski program's affordable housing work.

## **Help Florida's timber industry**

Nikki Fried, Florida's commissioner of agriculture and consumer services, is asking Washington to support a common-sense proposal to help Florida's timber industry, which has taken a beating from Hurricane Michael.

Because timber isn't classified as a crop, Florida's timber growers are not eligible for crop insurance assistance, Fried said in a news release.

She wants that classification to be changed to allow timber growers to receive assistance — and it should be a no-brainer for Washington to make that adjustment.

**Climate change plan**

The conservative solution to climate chaos, an existential threat to Florida, is gaining public support, according to Frank Luntz, a popular pollster for Fox News and the Republican Party.

The “no regrets” carbon-dividend plan has wide support across party lines: it calls for a carbon tax and a dividend returned to taxpayers. The effect would be revenue neutral.

One proposal from the bipartisan Climate Leadership Council calls for a steadily rising price on carbon; a family of four, for example, would receive about \$2,000 in payments each year.

It would use taxes to deter something we don’t want (carbon) — and provide revenue that produces something we do want (jobs).

It’s a common-sense idea that would also help our environment.

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