

FLAPOL

Budget conference: Lawmakers won't sweep affordable housing fund

No sweep this year.

By A.G. Gancarski | March 8, 2020

Legislative budget chairs said affordable housing funds will not be swept as has been the case in recent years. And then the House and Senate agreed on the biggest budget number for the fund in years.

The Governor and Senate each wanted \$387 million for the Sadowski Trust Fund while the House sought just \$144 million. But on Saturday, the House moved closer to the Senate's position with a \$370 million budget line.

The Senate accepted that.

The House's counteroffer provided \$115 million for affordable housing programs, \$225 million for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program and \$30 million for for the Hurricane Housing Recovery Program.

Senate budget chair **Rob Bradley** said "we're not going to sweep the affordable housing trust funds this year."

House appropriations chair **Travis Cummings** said "we've agreed to that."

Addressing the media, Cummings said "I know you've covered that a lot. We hear not only from a lot of constituents, but members also from a bipartisan standpoint."

A [bipartisan group of lawmakers](#) filed legislation this year to keep the funds from being swept. But the bills died in committees in both the House and the Senate.

"You've all reported on it often, rightly so. I think that's a big win this Session. I applaud Senate President **[Bill] Galvano**, Speaker **[José] Oliva**, and the Governor."

Sadowski funds are supposed to be used for housing projects, though they are often directed toward other projects.

Over the past decade, lawmakers have [swept more than \\$2 billion](#) from the state's affordable housing trust fund into general revenue. The 2008 crash and a slow recovery created pretexts, even in recent years with a flush economy.

Lawmakers swept the unspent \$125 million of the \$332 million from the 2019-2020 trust fund to general funds despite Gov. **Ron DeSantis** requesting they be reserved for housing.

Another \$115 million went toward Hurricane Michael recovery.

The previous year, funding response to the Valentine's Day massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland cut into affordable housing monies.

"Because of Parkland, we swept a lot of trust funds," Bradley said. "There just isn't enough money there to maintain the Senate's position of not sweeping the fund — we are going to be sweeping that fund."

FLAPOL

However, even with an expected \$25 million earmark for coronavirus response, it appears that legislators will be able to fully fund affordable housing.

House Democratic Leader **Kionne McGhee** thanked the budget heads for fully funding the housing budget. The Cutler Bay Representative has made it a priority position of his caucus.

“This is great news for working Floridians,” he said in a statement. “A family shouldn’t see all of their money consumed by rent because of our high real estate prices.”

The Sadowski Coalition, a group of statewide organizations dedicated to financing affordable housing, issued a statement lauding the move and the lawmakers that got it done.

“Today is a momentous day for Florida and all those around the state who are affected by the housing crisis.” Governor DeSantis has been a stalwart for affordable housing since taking office, recommending last session and this session that all the housing trust funds are used to create affordable housing in the State of Florida.

“We also thank Senate President Bill Galvano, Senate Appropriations Chair Rob Bradley and the rest of the Senate for its steadfast support of using all the housing trust fund monies. And this year, we thank House Speaker Oliva and House Appropriations Chair Travis Cummings for agreeing to this position, as well as all the House members who have been so supportive,” said **Jaimie Ross**, facilitator of the Sadowski Coalition and president and CEO of the Florida Housing Coalition.

Ross hopes this allocation helps to “usher in the end of housing trust fund sweeps.”

“Restoring the Sadowski Trust funds to normal operations, where the monies dedicated to affordable housing are appropriated for affordable housing is in Florida’s best interest. In just this year,” he added, “full appropriation will mean more than 30,000 jobs and more than \$4.4 billion in positive economic impact.”

Florida Politics’ Renzo Downey contributed to this post.

Article last accessed [here](#) on March 9, 2020.