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For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE- GACAR members go to Tallahassee to lobby for change

Gainesville, FL- January 10, 2017-Gainesville-Alachua County Association of REALTORS® (GACAR) members will go to Tallahassee to speak with state legislators on key real estate issues. Every year GACAR takes a bus full of members to the capital to advocate for Florida citizens.

This year GACAR members will focus discussions on four key issues: Business rent tax, assignment of benefits, affordable housing, and vacation rentals.

GACAR has asked to reduce the business rent sales tax. Florida now charges a 5.8% sales tax on business rent. We applaud the 2017 Legislature for lowering the sales tax, but encourage them to continue the reduction this session. The business rent tax is still creating a financial burden for any business that leases space — from the local pet shop and hair salon to the large retail store. Not to mention two out of every three jobs in Florida are created by a small business. Lowering the business rent tax will provide capital to expand, hire more employees, improve benefits and raise salaries. An eventual full repeal of this tax has the potential to add 185,000 jobs and \$21 billion back into the state's economy. If Florida lowers the business rent tax, small business owners, their employees and their families win. And when they win, Florida wins.

GACAR members advocated to reduce Assignment of Benefits (AOB) abuse that drives up insurance premiums for property owners. AOB allows policyholders to assign insurance benefits to a contractor to allow the contractor to charge and collect from insurance directly; however, a growing number of contractors are inflating the cost of repairs. Insurance companies withhold payment to the contractor, contractor then files a lawsuit to which the insurance company will typically settle to avoid the high cost of litigation. The additional cost of inflated services or additional litigations are passed onto policy holders. GACAR members hope to work out solutions that prevent this abuse and inflated insurance costs.

GACAR members have started the fund and now advocate to increase funding of the housing trust funds. The Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Funds were created in the early 1990s to help in good times and bad. These funds help families achieve the dream of homeownership with down payment assistance. They also provide housing rehabilitation and rental assistance to Florida's homeless, veterans, seniors and people with disabilities. Last year, the Legislature allocated \$270 million for affordable housing projects, the highest level in a decade. We applaud lawmakers for their financial support of housing programs. In Fiscal Year 2018-19, state economists estimate that \$314.08 million will be available for the housing trust funds. If all monies collected are fully

appropriated for housing, it will increase nearly 32,700 jobs and \$4.6 billion in positive economic impact in just one year. GACAR members will advocate to increase funding for the housing trust funds.

Last year GACAR members advocated to repeal and stop local laws, ordinances, and regulations adopted after 2011 that may restrict use of, prohibit, or regulate vacation rentals based solely on classification, use, or occupancy. This year the fight continues with GACAR members advocating to enact legislation concerning vacation rentals that treats homeowners equitably. Legislators need to take a leadership role on this issue and pass legislation that does not undermine property rights. Current codes, ordinances, and laws should be sufficient to maintain communities without burdensome regulations targeted at property owners. In Florida we rely on tourism, websites like Airbnb and others expand lodging options for visitors, who also spend money at restaurants, retail stores and other local businesses.

This will be another great trip to Florida's capitol to advocate for the REALTOR Party. GACAR members are scheduled to meet with all state legislators representing Alachua County. GACAR continues to be the voice of real estate in Alachua County.

Gainesville-Alachua County Association of Realtors®, the Voice of Real Estate in Alachua County, is dedicated to elevating the excellence, promoting the advancement and ensuring the public trust of the real estate profession while providing our members with the resources, technology, educational opportunities and leadership necessary to conduct an ethical, professional and profitable business.

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