

Contact: Scott Arvin, 2017 Gainesville-Alachua County Association of Realtors®  
President; (352) 871-8615

For Immediate Release

### **PRESS RELEASE- Local REALTORS advocate change in Tallahassee**

**Gainesville, FL- April 13, 2017-** On March 28<sup>th</sup>, Gainesville-Alachua County Association of REALTORS® (GACAR) members went 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 focused discussions on five key issues: Business rent tax, estoppel certificate fees, affordable housing, a property tax cap, and vacation rentals.

GACAR has asked to reduce the business rent sales tax. Florida charges a 6% sales tax on business rent, 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 cap the fees charged by community associations for estoppel certificates. Florida law allows associations to charge a “reasonable” fee to prepare an estoppel certificate. Some associations, however, have turned this administrative task into a cash cow, charging as much as \$1,000 for this payoff letter. Sellers often don't learn about these charges until they receive the closing documents. They have no option but to pay the fee, no matter how high. That's because their community association is the only source for the payoff information. It's time to restore fairness and predictability to real estate transactions by capping estoppel certificate fees. Very few instances of abuse occur in Alachua County, however GACAR members are advocating to put protections in place before major problems occur in our area.

GACAR members have started the fund and now advocate to increase funding of the Sadowski Affordable Housing Programs. 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 \$175 million toward the housing trust funds, the highest funding level in eight years. We applaud lawmakers for supporting housing programs. In 2016, there will be more than \$297 million available for affordable housing. The Florida Legislature has the opportunity to assist thousands of Floridians who have no place to call home. It's time to use these trust funds for their

intended purpose. The need is great. The money is available. GACAR members are working to make it happen.

GACAR members supported a permanent property tax cap on second homes and businesses. In 2008, Florida voters approved Amendment 1, which created a 10% cap on the annual increase of property taxes for all non-homestead properties. Non-homestead properties include second homes and businesses across the state. The 2008 amendment will sunset on Jan. 1, 2019, unless renewed in the 2018 general election.

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 was another great trip to Florida's capitol to advocate for the REALTOR Party. GACAR members were able to meet with all state legislators representing Alachua County. All of Alachua's legislators were very understanding of the issues and would stand in support with the REALTOR PARTY.

*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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