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For Immediate Release

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

Gainesville, FL- March 9, 2020-Gainesville-Alachua County Association of REALTORS® (GACAR) members went to Tallahassee to speak with state legislators on key real estate issues early in session, February 4th. 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, property rights, affordable housing, and water quality/ environmental funding.

GACAR has asked to reduce the business rent sales tax. Florida now charges a 5.5% sales tax on business rent. We applaud the recent Legislatures for lowering the sales tax from 6% to the current 5.5%, 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. \$156 million of savings to businesses as a result of reducing the business rent tax. If Florida lowers the business rent tax, small business owners, their employees and their families win. And when they win, Florida wins.

Recent updates: HB469-Eliminates the two witness requirement for real estate leases longer than a year- heading to Governor for final action.

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. More than 911,000 very low-income Floridians spend more than 50% of their income on housing, according to the Florida Housing Coalition. GACAR members asked legislators to allocate all the housing trust funds projected for Fiscal Year 2020-21 - \$387 million – to address Florida's affordable housing crisis.

Recent updates: For the first time in over a decade, the Florida Legislature has fully funded the state's housing trust funds. This is a session-defining victory, especially considering the difficult economic and societal circumstances we face.

Ask most in Florida or those thinking of coming to Florida why they want to be in Florida and the answers usually are: white sand beaches, lakes for boating, rivers for kayaking and our natural springs. Yet red tide, blue-green algae and other environmental crises threaten our precious natural resources. GACAR members asked legislators to

allocate \$625 million of beach restoration, springs restoration and Florida Forever, a state land conservation program. Communities throughout Florida were devastated in recent years by environmental issues such as blue-green algae and red tide. The 2019 Legislature allocated \$682 million for environmental projects. This funding will allow the state to complete critical environmental efforts such as construction of the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir.

Recent updates: Senate Bill 712, which is the environmental bill we are supporting, passed the Senate on a [39 – 0 vote](#), was sent to the House and then passed on a [118 – 0 vote](#)!

In 2018, 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. [University of Central Florida research](#) shows vacation home rentals boost Florida's economy by more than \$27 billion annually. The direct spending amounts to nearly \$46 million a day and approximately \$1.9 million every hour. Recent updates: SB 1128 has been temporarily postponed by the Rules Committee on 3/2/20; HB1011 was placed on the House special order calendar for 3/6/20.

This was another great trip to Florida's capitol to advocate for the REALTOR Party. GACAR members were able to meet with 3 of 4 state legislators representing Alachua County; unable to meet with Representative Brannan. 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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