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EDITORIAL

Housing the poor should be priority

A person has to be bad off financially to qualify for Supplemental Security Income, and be either over age 65, blind or disabled.

More than 93,000 Alabamians receive SSI, which the Social Security Administration administers, although the money doesn't come from the workers' trust fund.

SSI helps meet basic human needs, but it isn't enough money to put recipients in a modest one-room apartment. That means many SSI recipients need more help if they are to live on the \$637 a month pension.

Even the working poor have a problem finding affordable housing that is decent. You had better be earning at least \$10.40 per hour, that's \$416 a week, to afford even a modest two-room apartment.

For instance, the National Low Income Housing Coalition in Washington, D.C., says 42 percent of Morgan County's renters can't afford a two-bedroom apartment.

The story is similar across the state.

The Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama is using Alabama Arise Citizens' Policy Project, "Locked Out: Low Wages and Affordable Housing in Alabama," to focus attention on the need for the state to have a program that promotes ways to finance more affordable housing.

One way the group wants to help is to pay down the cost of construction for investors who agree to set aside some units for low-income residents.

That will cost money, of course, but not many dollars per person if we share the burden, which we should do.