Financial Wellness Through Home Ownership: The Helper Act, Mortgages and Housing Stability Transcript

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Introduction to the Show and Guest

Welcome to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. I'm Dr. Amy Coopersmith, a doctorate prepared nurse practitioner, and this show is about empowering you to live a radiant, healthy, and balanced life.

I'm very excited to introduce today's guest, Sam Royer. Hi, Amy. Hi. Sam is a full-service mortgage broker with 28 years of experience. He founded Salute Home Loans, where he specializes in sourcing and securing affordable mortgage, financing for former and active military members, law enforcement, firefighters, teachers, health care workers, and other civil servants.

Sam is also a Marine Corps veteran and the author of The Helper Act. Welcome. Thanks for having me, Amy. This is going to be a really neat discussion.

It's going to be awesome. So we haven't yet talked on the show about how financial concerns affect our wellness and specifically housing and housing security.

Yeah. Stress is a very bad thing for your health. Absolutely. So I can't think of a bigger stress than not having financial and housing security. Well, think about it with everything in our country going up.

I mean, literally, I think about milk the other day was like six bucks. So it's, you know, taxes are on the rise. I'm from Pennsylvania originally, where even their taxes are a little bit higher, but you go one state over and they're like triple the amount.

So you come to Florida, a lot of people come to Florida and they think, oh, great, I'm going to get a tax rebate or it's going to be cheaper, not a rebate, but cheaper.

And then boom, you get hit with your homeowners insurance being triple what it would be in Pennsylvania or New Jersey. So it really is.

The Helper Act and Housing Stress

It's something that we have to have legislators and others in our country just really come together and have experts at the table instead of people that are just really doing it for political points.

They have to do it for American points. So let's start with the helper act. First of all, how does a person author an act? Stupidity. But in all seriousness, I just, you know, sitting across from one of my buddies who's a cop and I am a Marine Corps veteran, never served in combat, very proud of my service, but wish it was longer.

And, you know, I sit across from these individuals that serve in our communities and, you know, he was struggling because they didn't have a down payment.

And I thought, well, this sucks and we got to do something about it. So, you know, I took this mission on where I reached out to actually Val Demings back in the day, who used to be a chief of police and a congresswoman.

You know, her husband was a sheriff. I reached out to Michael Waltz when he was our congressman at the time. And, you know, I tried to get them to do something about it.

So when you write legislation or you come up with an idea. I didn't write the legislation per se like line by line. Right. So if you read it, it's about five pages.

It's very lawyery. I came up with the concepts that were given to the Congressional and Senate offices, and then they had legal beagles in Washington basically do it, send it back and say, hey, Sam, what do you think about this?

Is there anything we should add or take away? So I was very honored that Congressman Rutherford and at the time, Senator Rubio's office, you know, allowed me to be a part of that mission ahead.

And once they kind of signed off, it was May 2021. I still have the picture of Congressman Rutherford with his mask on. you know, basically introducing the helper act and then about three months later, Senator Rubio joined on as well on the Senate side.

And it just was, you know, that was it five years ago and we're well a little less than five years ago. But we're gangbusters. So it's really, you know, you do it by trial and error, I guess.

I actually authored a bill in Pennsylvania And I'll never forget the Senate office said, how did you learn how to write a bill? I said, it's called cut and paste and Microsoft Word.

You take the best of different bills and sometimes you can put them together. And then obviously somebody that has that more experience will make it the fine tooth comb better.

So, what is the helper act so the helper act stands for homes for every local protector educator and responder. It's a bill that basically takes the best parts of VA, and it carbon copies it in a way, under an FHA loan which is a federal housing administration.

And what it does is, as long as you've served four years in your community. be it a law enforcement officer, a teacher, a firefighter, an EMT or paramedic, they can go to any FHA approved lender in the country, and they would not be required to put the three and a half percent down that FHA requires now.

They also would not have the monthly mortgage insurance, making it more affordable as a monthly payment. However, This is where some congressional leaders get caught up.

There is still a funding mechanism that the individual has to pay into that's an insurance fund. So if something would happen, let's say, God forbid, that that teacher could not pay their mortgage and they go into foreclosure.

The federal government has money sitting aside called a mutual mortgage insurance fund that would cover the lender in the event of default. So there is zero now hear this very clearly zero taxpayer dollar is going into this fund.

When you hear people say, Oh, the taxpayers on the hook. It's really not every FHA borrower in the country that borrows pays in. If there's a default, it comes out of that fund.

Okay, so this is very similar. It was inspired by the loans that as veterans were allowed to get. Yeah. Which, you know, we're very happy to have. We are.

Do you think, you know, you do mortgages, is lack of the down payment a major barrier for people to buy a home? that is the number one thing and you could look at you can google it you can look it up down payment assistance that's why even if you look at florida they have the florida hometown heroes down payment assistance is one of the key things just think about it if you're a civil servant you're making 50 000 a year you know that's four thousand one hundred sixty six dollars a month you take out taxes you're walking away with maybe thirty four to thirty six hundred dollars.

Now you just bought that six dollar milk. You bought gas maybe coming down, but it's still expensive. You know, then you're paying for taxes, insurance and other things.

I mean, rent alone could be two thousand dollars. So how much money are you really left over with? So it was geared towards the VA. But interesting point about the Helper Act, we have teachers involved.

We have legislators that literally don't like the teachers involved because of unions. It makes me sick to my stomach because I think to myself, you know, the military, like we talked about, we served, which yes, I called you Air Force, even though you're Army.

I'm Marines, right? But even look, the Marines, the Army, the Air Force, the Navy, the Space Force, We all have individual missions, right? But at the end of the day, we're all called the military, right?

So here with the Helper Act, you have police officers, they run into situations we don't want to, just like firefighters do. Police officers see some of the most horrible stuff, so do firefighters, right?

But teachers, I had a very close relative that became a teacher. And her first day on a job, a little girl, she was in middle school, came up and her dad was raping her.

That's your first day on a job as a teacher.

Affordable Housing, Teachers, and Public Servants

Now think about other things that happen in schools. I mean, we're in Flagler County, Florida. A teacher just got beat up last year over what, a Game Boy?

So it's not the cushy job of the 80s when I was growing up or we were growing up where, you know, I'm just going to go be a teacher and, you know, live out a 20-year career and it's going to be great and I'm going to retire one day.

Now it's very, it's a very critical role and I know I'm talking a lot. If you think of law enforcement agencies now are so integral with schools because of the critical nature.

I mean, heck, you go to church anymore and there's cops there. So, you know, all these different vital roles play a big part in our community and affordability.

You know, you asked about down payment. It's something that we're not really hurting the federal government. We're not hurting the world by helping these individuals.

We're only bringing esprit de corps and good things to them. And there's really no reason why any legislator should not be for this. So you mentioned the opposition to having teachers included in the bill.

It's related to the union, but aren't, don't these other organizations have unions as well? They all do, but teacher unions are very democratic led. And I could care less if you're a Democrat, Republican, I'm more of a Republican.

At the end of the day, you sit here and they're labeling people and our country is so labeled anymore. And you talk about stress levels, health and other things.

The stress level of just sitting there and watching the news anymore, You know, when we were growing up, we were told not to call each other names. We were taught to, well, hopefully we were taught not to pick on somebody for their downfalls or their win.

You know, I'll never forget Ryan Sporka, God rest his soul. He's unfortunately passed on, but I remember I picked on a kid and Ryan beat my tail in the shower and we were dressed, but in the shower after football practice, because I picked on a kid that was a little not disadvantaged, but They were weaker than me, right?

But today we see United States senators, congressmen and others, they're calling each other Nazis, they're bashing each other. And you talk about the health and welfare, where are children as far as like looking up to heroes and leaders to be able to understand that, look, when things like the helper act and even other things that come up, I mean, it can be saved the spotted owls and somebody is going to argue and say how bad that person is for bringing that to the legislature to get passage.

I get a little, I get a little passionate about this because I just don't understand it. You know, we both served and we signed on a dotted line to do something.

I don't know if you ever went to combat. I didn't, but there's the ability that we could have these individuals every day. They protect our most valuable assets, not our houses, our kids.

The firefighters protect our houses, the police officers protect our lives and EMTs and paramedics. I mean, I know they don't do it anymore, but like I remember actually a Daytona firefighter, huge dude.

He was awesome. I asked him a story, like one of his funniest moments. He said like the first time he went on a call, this, this more mature woman, like he had to give her mouth to mouth and she like grabbed the back of his head and started kissing him.

But it's like, Yeah, but I mean, they do things that we just are not like, call it a trained or willing in a lot of sense to do. So when you bring something to the United States Congress or Senate and you say, look, here's something that doesn't cost money.

Here's something that actually employment, Amy, for housing, employment is one of the biggest stability factors. So foreclosures don't happen. Cops, teachers and firefighters keep their jobs.

It doesn't matter if there's a pandemic or economic downturn. And let's just talk about stress again. These individuals come home. It's hard to de-stress.

Why do you think divorce rates are so high with these groups? Think about husbands and wives. You know, a man or a woman comes home. I remember here locally, I got to serve a bunch of officers.

They were doing sex stings. That sounds weird. It's not sex sting. It's sex stings where they're going after people that are predatorially going after younger people.

Well, I brought I brought them dinner, right? Well, just opening the door, they were so happy I brought dinner, but to see their faces of what they probably had to see now them then having to go home and seeing their young daughter or son, you know, if we can make their housing a little bit cheaper, so they don't have that stress, you know, they're going to be able to not be as as, you know, combative at their jobs in a lot of ways.

So Right, stress definitely trickles down into other aspects of life. So if the Helper Act were to be passed, it would eliminate the need for a down payment, but it would also, you mentioned, make the monthly payments cheaper?

Correct. So how does that work? So basically, FHA right now, if you get a mortgage, you pay an upfront mortgage insurance premium. So you pay into that fund.

And then every month, technically it's every year, but the lender cuts it up into 12 payments. But you pay every month into that fund as well. Well, right now, that fund has over 500% of what the minimum requirement by law is.

So really, we're over, we're basically, FHA bars are making the federal government money at this point. And that's where we say, don't pay it monthly, just pay it one time upfront, and then you're done.

So that would make on like a $200,000 house, your payments about 90 bucks cheaper a month. Now to some people, oh, $90 isn't gonna do anything. But what if your family's expanding?

That $90 could be a little bit more of a house for that extra bedroom. That $90 could be part of your electric bill, your water bill, but even those now, are they $90 anymore?

No, they're $200, $300.

Mortgage Proposals and Policy Critique

So any cent that we can save them is something forward, or they actually could just pay a little bit more, and maybe they pay their house off earlier.

It doesn't matter how you kind of skin the cat. It's the cat is fat and fluffy right now, and there's hair falling all over the place. We need to do something to change it up.

And unfortunately, you know, the Trump administration, I really wish somebody in the world would listen and hear because that's the problem. There's so many blockers in the United States Congress and Senate.

where, you know, something like this, I can't imagine President Trump saying like, this is a bad idea, or I hate this, because from my understanding, he loves teachers, cops, firefighters, teachers, he actually came out and said, I don't care if you're a union teacher, or a non union teacher, we're going to try and back you up.

Well, this is something that clearly is a win. And yeah, so. All right, well, I'm gonna have you hold that thought. We're gonna pause for a break from our sponsor.

You're listening to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. Don't go anywhere, we'll be right back. Welcome back to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy.

I'm Dr. Amy Coopersmith, and my guest today is Sam Royer. Before the break, we were talking about affordable housing and the helper act and mortgages.

So lately in the news, we've heard of a proposal for the 50 year mortgage. So as a mortgage broker, what do you think about Um, I think I'm trying to think of the correct terminology, but what, like, what are you thinking right now?

There's actually a 40 year mortgage option already that's out there, but a 50 year mortgage, I did some numbers on it and, uh, just off the top of my head, a $350,000 house.

If you extended that extra 20 years, you're paying double for your house. You're paying $350,000 more in interest and payments. And to me, you know, I understand what they're trying to do.

It lowers the payment by $256. I literally know the math, but you're spending 350 extra thousand dollars. So now you're talking if a kid bought a house at 21 and made their minimum payments, 71 years old, they'd be when their house is paid off in it.

It really I get it. Look, I'm glad that ideas are getting thrown around. Where I have issues is that you're throwing around ideas when there's already things on the table that you're not addressing, that you're not actually looking at to say these are viable options.

Another one that came out is the portable mortgage where you take what you had at an old house and you transfer it over to the new house. that whoever came up with that idea truly has never been in mortgage banking and what's happened is that you have a lot of people and I joke about Paul Blart mall cop but you have a lot of people playing cop that aren't cops and that's really what we have in Washington in a lot of sense where you have these individuals that have never been on the front line you know like a marine veteran or a marine everybody's a rifleman it doesn't matter if you're the commanding general or if you're a private pfc lance corporal you have to qualify in a rifle range right well right now we have people that haven't qualified on the rifle range that literally shooting rifles and that's just not what we as veterans should really be happy about and it look this is not a political podcast But you talk about health, you talk about wellness, you talk about even my skin breaks out a lot with eczema.

And when does that happen? When I'm stressed. Well, I itch my head all the time, because when you're trying to fight for something that you can believe in that really can help America, but nobody really listens.

And then you hear ideas like a 50 year mortgage, a portable mortgage, you know, that just it's like such a slap in the face to individuals that actually serve.

And I think it's something that whoever may be listening, call, pick up, find the leaders. I got a story. So Lehigh University is a huge Ivy League school out of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

I was doing a mortgage for the head of economics. And this is during the mortgage crisis in 2006, 2008. And I asked him, I said, hey, did any leaders reach out to you?

And he's like, for what? And I said, well, we're going through one of the biggest crises ever. and housing and I said you're the head of economics at Lehigh University and he was at a major university before that too he goes yeah they don't really reach out to us for that and I'm like if I'm a leader I'm not going to know everything if I'm a congressman I'm not going to know every single thing but if my community is filled with ivy league schools and other places that have people that have much more experience I'm still going to make the final decision on what I might vote or not vote for, but I'm going to ask their input.

I'm going to say, Hey, can you get, can we like have a round table and have a real serious discussion? Cause no offense. I'm not a economist, but you teach it.

So help me understand. Maybe I took econ 101, but it doesn't mean I know the economy every day. So just a quick story. Well, sometimes in the Army, I was an officer and I was put in charge of things.

I'm like, I don't know what I'm doing here, but you can't act that way. But you can say, hey, you've been deployed to this spot before. I'm going to ask you some questions.

And that's how you make informed decisions and can lead people properly. Every good leader ask underlings that have been doing things.

Advocacy, Calling Congress, and Public Pressure

It's like I told this the other day to somebody to claim more mine how that has I believe and the words are going to mess up Marines don't make fun of me.

I think it says this way front or something on the front and they say it because somebody literally probably didn't do it. But it's like leaders have that tool in a claymore mine and they see directly on the front it says this way front but they're putting it the opposite way.

and you just scratch your head and you say why like, but we keep voting people in that aren't doing the job and that's what kills me. So you mentioned before that people should speak up, they should call their congressman.

How do people speak up like what's the method because you're pretty good at that. So I served under General Mattis and I talked to him recently and I remember when I talked to him he said hey Sam there's this new thing called Google and I just laughed because this is a commanding general but anyway he um yeah you can google you can find your congressman's number so I just actually put out a video today about a senator in Pennsylvania who straight up told me to my face that he will not back the bill because teachers are on it.

So I put a nice little thing, my dog was with me, and I said, teachers in Pennsylvania, you should call. And I actually had the phone number in my video to call up.

When you call up your congressman's office, it's not about being rude, mean, or anything else. It's about just saying, hi, I'm a constituent in the state of Pennsylvania, and I'm curious.

I heard that there is a bill that will help teachers with and cops and firefighters with affordable housing. I'm just curious, why is Senator McCormick not on this bill, in this case, in his stance, right?

And his office should have a reply, not no comment. It's you're on Senate banking, which oversees our whole economy, basically. And you have a duty to your constituents to go with things that are going to help your constituents.

Now I can tell you in his case, we had the Sheriff's Association, the Firefighters Association, the Police Association, everybody in Pennsylvania, mayors, major city mayors, sheriffs, individual sheriffs.

I think we have over 40 have written letters to him. He won't join the bill cause teachers are on it. And it's like, okay, all your teachers in your state, which I think are over a hundred thousand.

So you don't care that they can't buy a house more affordably when it's not costing taxpayers money. So you can literally Google it, call their Washington office and just be respectful and say, I would like my Senator, my Congressman to join this legislation and give a heartfelt reason why.

Do you think if enough people speak up that that might change the outcome? um yeah i just know people have a lot of things going on in their lives and a lot of people don't think their voices matter and in all honesty i've pissed a lot of people off probably even somebody listening to this i was just on kyw in philadelphia and they basically reported on senator mccormick not not giving any comment about this that's a huge radio station in philadelphia that's actually very Many politicians listen to and it's the truth, you know, and, and it's, you know, the Wall Street Journal just talked to me about the 50 year mortgage, other organizations, Newsmax will probably be on this week about these situations.

And it really is if more people speak up or call in and say, Hey, we have experts that are out here like we'd like to be. um um have a voice so and you know byron donald's running for governor here in in florida and you know i personally am back in paul renner for a reason he's navy vet but i also believe that he's going to make change byron donald's for you know five years his office is right next to congressman rutherford's i've been in his office i've tried to meet with him i've tried to talk to him he could have been on this bill for five years and zero has he been on this bill he sits on the committee that could help and at this point hopefully i will meet with him one day where he will come to flagler county and i will ask a very nice question sir i respect your leadership i respect that you are serving in the united states congress i just have a question If you'd like to be the governor of the state of Florida, how are you going to make it better for police officers, teachers and firefighters when in fact we have a program in Florida just to try and help them now that's funded in a lot of sense by money from Florida.

But there's been a bill in the United States Congress for five years that you've not joined once. And your office is literally next to the man that wrote or legislated the bill.

And we've reached out to you and you've never gotten back. So how is your leadership going to be different in the state of Florida for the people that serve in our communities if you do become governor?

And I would love to hear his response. It probably will be, well, I didn't know about it. I didn't hear about it. And it's just, that's the same kind of stuff we all hear and get tap danced around.

But people are not, people are scared to question these individuals and you don't do it in a mean way. I've seen a lot of people be rude to people and just yelling.

I might be passionate and I'd be pissed to be honest, but I will still respect a man for serving. Cause he has to go through a lot. His family has to go through a lot.

But at the end of the day, I want an answer. What, how will you be different? So when we talk about individual wellness and advocacy, so when you should feel my heart rate right now, I'm sure you're probably like, yeah.

So, so when a person, I think when people are empowered, there's a situation they don't like, and if they feel helpless, then that creates stress and other negative consequences.

But if we can, you know, make them feel empowered, like, and it starts with a phone call, right. But then does it go to a letter writing campaign? Does it like, you know, I think it really a person can kind of take charge of their situation.

by becoming aware and becoming an advocate for something they believe in. I think it's like everything. You have

to be personally affected. And there was a congressman that just had a granddaughter that got an FHA loan and had to change some stuff up.

And when I pointed out to the congressman how much she just spent and sent to FHA, it was like $8,000.

Leadership, Wellness, and Closing Thoughts

And then she's going to pay every year a couple hundred dollars. He was like, this is crazy. I said, yes, sir. There's $174 billion sitting there just You know, and, and she just put money into it.

Well, that changes his persona of, Whoa, this is crazy. So it really, you know, it can, it can be exciting. It could be fun. It could be challenging, but yes, there are times you have to de-stress and I'm an alcohol abuser.

I'm luckily I haven't drank in almost three years, but the two times I've been triggered in the last three years was one time when a Senator didn't show for a meeting.

I was upset. And then I went for, I took a pre-workout at six o'clock at night, went for an eight mile run, but Smart, but then, um, you know, just stressful situation.

So you have to have those places we go to CrossFit. That's kind of where we get it out. I didn't mention that. So I have a couple of my CrossFit friends that have come to join me on the show and we're just a special breed.

And, uh, and, you know, I really appreciate you coming and sharing your opinions on this. And so before we go, if there was one thing, if you had a magic wand, what would you change about the housing lending situation?

I would have President Trump's leadership team truly bring in street level professionals to talk about housing and what really is going on in the front lines.

And then hopefully that will give executable items to his leadership team to actually change and help housing. We're never going to fix it all. But it's just like we have housing supply issues in certain areas.

But like Flagler County, we got millions of homes. But then you go to Lehigh Valley, where I'm from in Pennsylvania, there's limited supply of homes, we have to work on them together, like railroad tracks going in the same direction to get to the final destination.

And unfortunately, right now, people are so off track. And that's my number one thing would be President Trump, give me 45 seconds. I'll explain to you why things could be different.

And at the end of the day, your leadership team has to execute on it. I look forward to seeing what you can do. Yeah, we'll see. Thanks again. Thanks, Amy.

And thanks to our listeners for tuning in to Energize and Revitalize with Dr. Amy. If there are topics you would like to hear about, please send an email to radiantpodcasts2025 at gmail.com.

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It really helps us reach more listeners just like you. I'll be back next Saturday morning at 7.30 with more expert insights and practical strategies to help you live your healthiest, most energized life.

Until then, stay healthy and here's to your best life.