The Florida Commission on Ethics unanimously approved Gov. Rick Scott's plan Friday to put his wide-ranging financial assets into a blind trust, steered by money managers independent of the governor.

The Republican governor, who reported a net worth of $218 million when he filed as a candidate last year, has been forced to tamp down questions about the intersection of his private wealth and public office - even before his election in November.

Attorneys for Scott said they sought the advisory opinion from the ethics panel to thwart speculation about possible conflicts of interest.

"It's something he takes seriously," Scott spokesman Brian Burgess said after the brief hearing. "It's been a very long and complex process because of the unique questions that are presented. He's pleased we can put his assets in a place that meets federal guidelines, at least, and satisfies the Florida Ethics Commission."

Burgess, however, would not say whether the governor planned to make public any of the documents related to the trust, his wife's assets or the level of cash he intends to keep close at hand.

Scott sold the state's two aircraft this year and has been using his private seven-passenger jet for travel, fueling and maintaining the twin-engine Raytheon 400-A out of his pocket.

He's also turned down the governor's $130,273 salary. Burgess on Friday provided no details of how Scott is financing his daily activity as the state's chief executive.

On Friday, the ethics commission without comment accepted Executive Director Philip Claypool's recommended opinion, which confirmed that Scott would likely be shielded from potential violations of state ethics laws by creating the trust.

Scott's holdings are mostly in large, publicly traded companies, but attorneys for the governor also provided specific details of five other investments with clear Florida ties.

Scott's most controversial investment, Solantic Corp., an urgent care company he founded in 2001, wasn't part of the panel's review.
Scott last month said he was selling the company after pushing back against criticism that the firm could profit from health care initiatives his administration was advancing. But Scott and Burgess said Friday that the sale hasn't happened yet.

"We're just waiting for regulatory approval," Scott said, adding that he expected the sale to be finalized within 30 days.

Burgess said Solantic's sale to minority investors in the firm has been delayed by difficulty in transferring a number of licenses held by Solantic. The move could take as long as 60 days, he said.

Scott initially refused to sell Solantic, then moved it into a trust held by his wife, Ann, while refusing to restrict the firm from seeking business from the state. The ethics opinion Scott sought and received Friday made no mention of his wife's assets.

While Scott spent $73 million of his own money on last fall's race for governor, his wife steered $12.8 million from the F. Annette Scott Revocable Trust to her husband's campaign.

As questions lingered about Solantic's possible role in a state Medicaid overhaul or expanded employee drug testing sought by Scott, the governor last month announced the sale.

Scott has talked about putting his assets into a blind trust since the campaign. But it, too, is a lengthy process, Burgess said Friday.

Scott, though, insisted later, "It's formed."

Three of the companies detailed in Friday's request from Scott for an advisory opinion from the ethics panel are in the propane and natural gas transportation business. The fourth is Republic Services, the nation's second-largest waste-hauling company.

Scott also is a limited partner in a New York-based investment fund that has a controlling interest in 21st Century Oncology, which operates cancer radiation centers in Florida.

"The blind trust is the right thing to do," said Norman Ostrau, director of the Public Ethics Academy at Florida Atlantic University. "It's admirable of the governor. But he still knows he has these investments. But the more he can disclose, the better."

Florida Democrats, who had questioned Scott's Solantic dealings, renewed their criticism, saying his latest step fell short.

"Until Rick Scott fully discloses all the assets that are controlled by himself or his immediate family, questions about conflicts of interest remain unanswered," said Eric Jotkoff, a Florida Democratic Party spokesman.