

N E W S
New York State
Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection

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Lawyers Helping Victims

(Albany, NY-- 8/18/15) New York's legal profession, through the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, recently awarded over \$4.2 million in reimbursement to 111 law clients who lost money due to dishonest conduct by 20 former attorneys.

The Lawyers' Fund is a unique client reimbursement program financed by attorneys in New York State which reimburses law clients for financial losses caused by their attorney's dishonest conduct in the practice of law. No other profession provides such protection to its clients.

The Lawyers' Fund receives a portion of the registration fees paid by New York's attorneys. No taxpayer money is used for this client protection program. Of every dollar received by the Lawyers' Fund, over 92 cents go directly to client reimbursement.

Of the 111 awards granted by the Lawyers' Fund, 65 (58%) of the Fund's awards totaling over \$1.5 million reimbursed the thefts of personal injury settlements by four now disbarred lawyers. These four former lawyers, Stephen R. Krawitz and Donald B. Rosenberg of Manhattan, and Robert C. Fontanelli and Kenneth J. Gellerman of Brooklyn, were all criminally prosecuted for their thefts.

The Lawyers' Fund is administered by a seven-member Board of Trustees appointed by the State Court of Appeals, New York's high court. The Trustees serve without compensation. Since 1982, the Fund has restored more than \$185 million to 8,211 eligible law clients.

The Lawyers' Fund is chaired by **Eric A. Seiff**, a Manhattan lawyer with Scopetta, Seiff, Kretz & Abercrombie. In announcing the awards, Mr. Seiff said:

"The theft of law client money is not only a crime but a profound violation of the trust placed in lawyers. On behalf of the 297,000 members of New York's legal profession, the Lawyers' Fund strives to restore that trust by reimbursing the financial harm caused by these few bad apples in our profession."

In addition to Mr. Seiff, the Trustees are **Peter A. Bellacosa**, an attorney with the Manhattan law firm of Kirkland & Ellis; **Nancy Burner**, an attorney with Nancy Burner & Associates, P.C. in Setauket, Suffolk County; **Stuart M. Cohen**, a sole practitioner in Rensselaer, Rensselaer County; **Patricia L. Gatling** of Manhattan, New York State's Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights; **Charlotte G. Holstein** of Syracuse, a civic leader and Executive Director of F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse; and **Anthony J. Baynes** of Williamsville, the founder and Chairman of the AJ Baynes Group, a Buffalo based development and logistics company.

Types of losses covered by the Lawyers' Fund include a lawyer's theft of estate assets, real estate down payments, litigation settlement proceeds, and law client money embezzled in investments within an attorney-client relationship. The Fund has no authority to compensate for alleged malpractice or assist in resolving disputes over legal fees.

The Lawyers' Fund is located in Albany. Telephone: 800-442-3863. Website: www.nylawfund.org