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Former financial adviser faces 20-year sentence for fraud

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, N.C. -- A former financial adviser who was the focus of an investigation by the state Department of the Secretary of State has pleaded guilty to securities violations and was sentenced to at least 20 years in prison.

Joe Jones was sentenced to a maximum of 26 years in prison after admitting in court Monday that he conned hundreds of people from Rocky Mount and the surrounding region out of millions of dollars during a seven-year period.

Prosecutors said most of the \$8.6 million given to Jones was used in a so-called Ponzi scheme, using the money from later investors to repay earlier investors.

"All that money went back into paying the original investors," Assistant District Attorney Keith Werner said. "Some of the first in got their money back, but the last in didn't get anything.

"There's really no way to pay these victims back."

Jones was originally indicted on 100 counts of securities fraud but will serve time for 41 counts of securities fraud and five counts of obtaining property by false pretense as a part of a plea agreement.

He will also have to testify against his co-defendant, Charles Harrison of Charlotte, who faces similar charges.

Dozens of investors attended the court hearing Monday, telling Superior Court Judge Ben Alford how Jones' scheme had affected them. A couple of people in their 60s said they had to return to work.

Jones apologized to investors and his family in a statement before the judge sentenced him.

"I will continue to do anything I can to rectify the situation," Jones said.

Information from: Rocky Mount Telegram, <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com>

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