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Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Prison Sentence Secured for Fraudster



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced a 12-year prison sentence for a fraudster who stole more than $83,000 from Floridians by claiming to be an investor. Leandro Obenauer took deposits from multiple Floridians to purchase homes. The defendant also wrote fraudulent checks, convinced victims to pay for representation to argue for victims' mortgage rates to be lowered and tried to set up fake investment plans.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "The defendant targeted multiple victims, with various schemes, all in an effort to steal tens of thousands of dollars. While he was able to run from those he scammed, he wasn't able to escape justice. My Statewide Prosecutors have ensured that he will spend a long time in prison where he can no longer defraud Floridians."

The investigation, led by the Florida Department of Financial Services, found that Obenauer claimed to be an investor in advertisements on Craigslist. The defendant also listed homes for sale. Once victims sent in deposits on the homes or down payments for refurbishing, Obenauer stopped all communication and never reimbursed the victims for any of the money.

In one case, Obenauer convinced a victim that the mortgage rates paid by the victim were too high and then claimed to have the capability of reworking the mortgage to get a lower rate. The victim paid Obenauer $3,500 and stopped making mortgage payments, while the defendant worked on the negotiations. Instead of reworking the rate, Obenauer disappeared with the money and the victim nearly lost the home.

During the same time period, a senior victim responded to one of Obenauer's ads. The victim's

husband recently passed away—leaving the victim with money to invest. After wining and dining the victim, Obenauer convinced the woman to invest $50,000 into a bogus investment plan, promising to pay the victim dividends each month. The victim wrote the check and brought it to the bank. Luckily, the bank teller thought the interaction seemed strange and, after speaking with the victim individually, concluded the entire situation to be fraudulent. The teller reversed the payment and the victim did not lose any money.

Judge Tom Young of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court sentenced Obenauer to 12 years in prison, followed by 15 years of probation. Obenauer is charged with organized fraud of more than $50,000, a first-degree felony. The probation will include the payment of restitution, cost of prosecution, cost of investigation and will not allow for any contact with victims or witnesses.

Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Rebecca Smith-Hameroff prosecuted this case.