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**FORMER GEORGIA ATTORNEY SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR
MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR REAL ESTATE PONZI SCHEME**

Atlanta, GA - STEVEN H. BALLARD, 53, of McDonough, Georgia, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Thomas W. Thrash, Jr. to serve over five years in federal prison on a wire fraud charge involving a real estate investment scam that lasted over five years and defrauded a dozen victims in Georgia, Florida and Tennessee.

Clayton County District Attorney Tracy Graham Lawson said, "I am gratified that the U.S. Attorney's Office was able to present the losses of so many victims to the Court, and thereby obtain justice for those who relied on this former attorney and his 'legal' papers. In Clayton County alone, our victims lost over \$200,000, but there were more victims spread well beyond our county limits which were included in this federal prosecution."

BALLARD was sentenced to five years, three months in prison to be followed by 3 years supervised release, and ordered to pay approximately \$1.13 million in restitution to scheme victims. There is no parole in the federal system. BALLARD pleaded guilty to the charge on July 9, 2009.

According to Acting United States Attorney Yates and the information presented in court: From September 2002 through May 2006, BALLARD, a former McDonough-based real estate and business law attorney, operated a fraudulent real estate investment scam, commonly known as a "Ponzi" scheme. During the time of scheme he collected over \$2 million from investors in Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee. In Georgia alone, he solicited funds from victims in Duluth, Dunwoody, Fayetteville, Jackson, Jonesboro, Newnan, Palmetto, Peachtree City, and Whitesburg. BALLARD falsely promised "lucrative" real estate and other investments which never took place, often preparing HUD-1 Settlement Statements, Warranty Deeds and Sales Contracts to reflect non-existent property purchases while using a portion of the scheme proceeds to repay former victim-investors and clients whose cases he had mishandled. BALLARD made reimbursements to victims only if they detected the scheme. All repayments were funded with money from new victim-investors.

BALLARD's law license was suspended by the State Bar of Georgia in September 2005, and he was disbarred in May 2006.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Clayton County District Attorney's Office, assisted by the Henry County Police Department and the Peachtree City Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorney Gale McKenzie is prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, Acting United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.