

The Stock Scam Has Many Faces

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Body

To the Editor:

Re "Welcome to America, and to Stock Fraud" (front page, May 15):

Affinity fraud affects more than recent immigrants to the United States.

State securities regulators are also troubled by the rise of religious affinity fraud. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been lost in scams like the Florida-based Greater Ministries International, a so-called gifting program that was in fact a vast Ponzi scheme (estimated losses: nearly half a billion dollars).

Earlier this year, the leaders of Greater Ministries were convicted of conspiracy and fraud and face prison terms, yet the problem continues to grow. Witness the criminal case involving the Baptist Foundation of Arizona (losses of more than \$600 million). The lesson: Whether you hear it from your pastor or from a parishioner, if something sounds too good to be true, it is.

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Administrators Association

Washington, May 15, 2001

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