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Florida Supreme Court disbars Scott Rothstein

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Fort Lauderdale attorney Scott Rothstein, who is under federal investigation in a \$1 billion Ponzi scheme, just lost his law license.

The Florida Supreme Court disbarred the embattled Rothstein on Wednesday. The high court provided no details in its one-page order.

Rothstein, 47, had voluntarily submitted paperwork to the Florida Bar to surrender his law license earlier this month after news broke of his alleged fleeing of investors in his legal-settlement deals.

The Florida Bar, which was investigating his alleged theft of client trust accounts, accepted Rothstein's offer last week, but his disbarment only became official with the state Supreme Court's action.

Rothstein could not be reached for comment. His lawyer, Marc Nurik, has said Rothstein consented to disbarment "because he thinks it's the right thing to do."

The Florida Bar also has removed Rothstein from a grievance committee that considers ethics and other complaints against lawyers.

And on Tuesday, Gov. Charlie Crist suspended Rothstein from the Fourth District Court of Appeal Judicial Nominating Commission. Crist appointed Rothstein on Aug. 25, 2008, and four days later the lawyer gave \$140,000 to the Republican Party of Florida.

Meanwhile, the Florida Bar has opened investigations into four attorneys at Rothstein's now-defunct Fort Lauderdale law firm.

The attorneys are Stuart Rosenfeldt, cofounder and co-owner of the Rothstein Rosenfeldt Adler law firm in Fort Lauderdale; Russell Adler; David Boden and Grant Smith, said bar spokesman Francine Walker.

The bar opened files on the attorneys around the same time it announced earlier this month that Rothstein had voluntarily surrendered his law license.

The investigation into Boden -- who is not licensed as an attorney in Florida -- is focused on whether he practiced law at the firm or worked as an administrator. He is licensed in New York.

Boden's New York bar renewal was due by Nov. 2, but he has not done so as of Nov. 24, according to the New York State Office of Court Administration.

The Florida Bar does not confirm the nature of the investigations, which could take several months. Lawyers are eligible to practice law while the investigations are underway.

The four attorneys could not be reached or declined to comment.

"An investigation is exactly that," said Bruce **Lehr**, attorney for Rosenfeldt. "If there are findings, we will have something to talk about then."

Smith has fully cooperated with the bar, including participating in a 90-minute interview Monday, said his attorney, Neal Sonnett.

"The bar has an obligation to look into any allegations of trust account errors or misuse," said Sonnett, who said he told the U.S Attorney's Office that Smith is willing to meet with them. "Grant has done absolutely nothing wrong."

Smith, who was promoted in October to assistant managing shareholder, had signatory authority on some law firm accounts. He is the only remaining lawyer at the firm and is assisting the trustee, Herbert Stettin, who is untangling the finances and winding down affairs at the law firm.

Rothstein returned from Morocco in early November to face the federal investigation after his alleged Ponzi scheme unraveled and his politically-connected Fort Lauderdale law firm collapsed.

The 70-attorney law firm is now in bankruptcy court and lawyers have fled for other jobs.

Miami Herald staff writer Marc Caputo contributed to this report.

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