

# Immigration Lawyer Charged With Investment Fraud

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A Los Angeles immigration lawyer was charged Wednesday with running a fraudulent scheme to recruit Chinese and Korean immigrant investors for an ethanol project that was never built.

Justin Moongyu Lee, 57, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Santa Ana on nine counts of wire fraud, the U.S. attorney's office said in a statement.

Federal prosecutors said Lee took roughly \$47 million from 94 foreigners who each invested \$500,000 plus fees hoping to obtain green cards under the United States' immigrant investor program, which lets foreigners seek green cards if they invest in projects designed to create jobs.

Lee misused the money by transferring funds to foreign accounts he controlled and investing in a Philippines mining project, according to the indictment. He also filed bogus paperwork with immigration authorities, the statement said.

The Securities and Exchange Commission on Wednesday filed a civil complaint against Lee, his wife and Thomas Edward Kent, his law partner at the time, related to the same alleged scheme.

"These immigration lawyers exploited a desire by foreign investors to participate in a program that would not only generate them a positive investment return, but also provide them a path to legal residence in the United States," Michele Wein Layne, regional director of the SEC's Los Angeles office, said in a statement. "Long after all construction had ceased, they continued to falsely tell investors that they were building the plant."

Lee was in custody in Korea. He was arrested there on similar charges filed by Korean authorities, said George Newhouse, an attorney for Lee's wife in the civil case.

It was not clear whether Lee, who lives in Los Angeles, has a lawyer in the U.S. A message was left for Dixon Gardner, the attorney who represented him in a disciplinary case filed by the State Bar.

Newhouse said Rebecca Taewon Lee, who managed Lee's law office, was not involved in any kind of fraud. A message seeking comment was left for Kent's lawyer, Jacob Shahbaz.