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NYC Atty Kossoff Gets Up To 13.5 Years For Stealing \$14.6M

By [Emma Whitford](#)

Law360 (May 6, 2022, 11:45 AM EDT) -- Former New York City real estate attorney Mitchell Kossoff was sentenced to up to 13 1/2 years in prison Friday after pleading guilty to stealing more than \$14.6 million from at least 35 individual and business clients.



Mitchell Kossoff, center, enters Manhattan criminal court Friday morning for his sentencing. (Photo: Curtis Mean)

Kossoff, 68, appeared in Manhattan criminal court after **pleading guilty** in mid-December to three counts of grand larceny in the first, second and third degree, as well as one count of scheme to defraud in the first degree.

An emotional Kossoff addressed the court Friday, saying, "I have committed crimes and am deserving of punishment."

Speaking directly to his victims, Kossoff acknowledged that "simple words... cannot undo the harm that I have caused," but that "each and every one is in my prayers," and that his ultimate goal is to make financial amends.

Kossoff also urged the public "not to judge this noble profession based on my acts" during what he called "a very sordid chapter of my life."

The plea agreement, which the court accepted Friday, held Kossoff responsible for repaying his victims. He will serve concurrent sentences between 4 1/2 and 13 1/2 years.

According to plea documents, Kossoff, who founded the Manhattan firm Kossoff PLLC in 2013, used stolen escrow funds in a variety of ways, including to pay back clients from whom he had previously stolen. The scheme stretched back to at least December 2017.

Former Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. **began investigating** Kossoff in April 2021, shortly after the attorney stopped communicating with staff and clients. Kossoff's firm, described on its now-dark website as a "full service real estate firm" with 30 attorneys handling litigation and transactions, swiftly shuttered.

Numerous former Kossoff PLLC clients subsequently filed a flurry of lawsuits against Kossoff and his firm, seeking to recover more than \$10 million they'd placed in escrow — an amount experts **called stunning**.

An overlapping group of former clients also **pushed the firm** into bankruptcy last April. Those proceedings are ongoing.

Wearing a gray sweater and jeans, Kossoff arrived at court Friday carrying a large clear plastic bag of personal items including books and towels. About 10 supporters sat in the gallery and hugged him before he approached the bench.

Before hearing Kossoff's statement, Judge Laurie Peterson called victim Ilomai Kurrik to provide a statement.

Kurrik, a managing director at Siguler Guff & Co. LP, began to cry as she addressed Kossoff directly, saying that he stole what amounted to her life savings after she and her ex-husband hired him to sell their condominium on West 108th Street in Manhattan in June 2018.

The sale price of \$305,000 "may not sound like a lot compared to the other victims, but to me it represented my whole life savings," Kurrik said, adding that she is a single mother of three with more than \$200,000 in debt.

"I gave him my nest egg and he stole it completely," Kurrik said. "He is the embodiment of why everyone hates lawyers... he disgusts me."

Also on Friday, Assistant District Attorney Ryan Gee summarized seven other victim statements, from clients who lost between \$590,000 and nearly \$2.5 million.

Among them are couples who hired Kossoff to sell their homes and one "retired and disabled individual" who had agreed to an apartment buyout, Gee said.

Kossoff's defense attorney, Walter Mack of Doar Rieck Kaley & Mack, told the court Friday that "it is always sobering and filled with remorse to listen to victims."

Mack also described his client as an acquaintance of more than 20 years, with a record of service to the community.

"When he is released... he will return to his family and return to his life of service," Mack said.

In a press statement Friday, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said that Kossoff violated his clients' trust.

"When clients hire counsel to represent them, they expect their attorney will follow the highest ethical standards," he said. "Yet Mitchell Kossoff violated the fundamental trust of his clients by taking millions for himself."

Kossoff is represented by Walter Mack of Doar Rieck Kaley & Mack.

The state is represented by Assistant District Attorneys Catherine McCaw and Ryan Gee.

The case is People of the State of New York v. Kossoff, case number 028944/2021, in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of New York.

--Editing by Alex Hubbard.

Update: This story has been updated with comments from Kossoff, a victim, and the District Attorney's Office.

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