

Are brokers to blame for stock market losses?

Should a broker invest the money of a 79-year-old woman into aggressive, risky growth funds?

Well, that's what happened to a Commack woman, who lost about \$100,000 after being placed in what Robert J. Cava said were the wrong funds for her.

Cava is the West Babylon attorney that took out local ads in three church bulletins in Suffolk County about two months ago, telling parishioners that they might be able to recover some of their money lost in the

stock market.

A month ago, he said he was starting to get phone calls based on those ads, which are still running.

Now he's considering filing suits in nine cases, including one on behalf of the woman in Commack.

"My heart breaks for these people," Cava said. "I look at the funds [her money] was placed in, and I think, what is this? What were they doing?"

One of those nine cases has already been

filed with the NASD – formerly the National Association of Securities Dealers – which handles the arbitration process. The case of the woman in Commack could become the second one filed.

"I'm waiting to hear back from the broker's insurance company on the first filed case, because I'm wondering if they'd like to settle," Cava said. "In that case, again, we saw an older person, [money] get placed into funds that were totally unsuitable."

Cava said that some brokers had placed

clients into funds based on commissions, not on what was best for the investor. Other brokers simply didn't know what they were doing, he added.

"There are a lot of these cases," he said. "I'm going to file a case only if I think I can win. But there are a lot of examples out there. It's awful."

Cava added that he will get paid for his work only if he wins.