**2015: *Strikeout!***

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**Thus ends 2015, the worst year for US stocks since 2008, with the S&P 500 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average, NYSE Composite Index, and the Russell 2000 all closing the year with losses**, with the NASDAQ Composite Index ending the year with a gain of +5.71%. The market did experience the usual “Santa Rally” from December 21st through December 29th, and while the rally did increase the broad US indices above their December 18th levels, the rally largely turned to a lump of coal in the last two trading days of the year, during which the S&P 500 declined by -1.65% over the last two days.

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“Calls to FINRA Senior Helpline Uncover Emerging Scams” published at ThinkAdvisor

“Since launching its Securities Helpline for Seniors in April, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority said it has received more than 2,500 calls (lasting an average 25 minutes!) and helped senior investors recover close to $750,000 in voluntary disbursements from FINRA member firms.

In a Wednesday report on the helpline, FINRA said callers, who ranged in age from 22 to 100, voiced concerns about products such as variable annuities, mutual funds, real estate investment trusts and, most recently, energy sector securities. The helpline aided FINRA in identifying several emerging scams, including fraud centering on taxes, bogus lottery winnings and binary options, all of which were flagged by FINRA and resulted in the self-regulator issuing investor alerts. The helpline callers—who hail from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada, Scotland, Vietnam, Israel, Ireland and the United Kingdom--also sought help on how to review an investment account statement and access investor tools and resources (such as BrokerCheck) to assist them with lost securities. The most calls came from Florida, California and New York.

More troubling concerns were raised regarding potential unsuitable recommendations, fraud, or illegal activity involving brokerage accounts and investments, as well as abuse and exploitation of seniors by persons outside of the securities industry, the report notes. The toll-free helpline, staffed by FINRA employees, seeks to resolve callers’ issues as quickly as possible, with frequent follow-up calls needed to glean additional information and documentation. In October and November, helpline staff conducted more than 2,000 follow-up calls with investors, firms and third parties to pursue and resolve investor inquiries, the report notes. If an initial assessment uncovers “serious misconduct” by a securities industry professional, FINRA opens an investigation. The self-regulator also refers to federal and state agencies those matters that fall outside its jurisdiction—and has made more than 75 such referrals since the helpline launched on April 20.

 **Since hitting the 2015 high point back in Summer 2015:**

***► The NASDAQ Composite Index has declined by -4.05%.***

***► The S&P 500 Index has declined by -4.07%.***

***► The Dow Jones Industrial Average has declined by -4.84%.***

***► The NYSE Composite Index has declined by -9.75%***

***► The Russell 2000 Index has declined by -12.34%***

**Nearly 70% of investors lost money in 2015,** according to OpenFolio, an app that allows investors to track investment performance and compare their portfolio with other users