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I started investing in Wall Street right out of college..and in those days things were pretty calm. One got 5% - 6% steady dividends and could reasonably expect 5 - 10% annual growth from the underlying corporation. Brokerage commission was 2 - 3% of purchase amount and a penalty if the purchase was an odd lot size. Sure the Dow went up and down but that was generally linked to known events.

In the early 1980's I needed a stable basic income source to cover my son who had just started Stanford and with Grad School on the horizon.

Muni Bonds seemed like the ideal answer, good security, a given fixed income, and your investment returned at some future scheduled date.

Boy..was I naive, over the years I have dealt with some 5 or 6 Brokerage Houses and each have a story - not particularly good for an industry with several trillion dollars at risk.

My first adventure was with Washington State Public Power Adm. generically called WHOOPS. Of the 5 tranches of Bonds offered 1 and 2 was Government backed, 3,4,& 5 was not insured but looked really safe. I was sold tranche number 4 - my greed for a slightly higher yield ultimately I got back about 50% of my investment.

Reaching for a high yield I shifted my account to Drexel,Burnham & Lambert. I got involved with several issues which turned out to be secured by raw land and an Oklahoma Hospital Center on a fast road to bankruptcy. As offered the issue looked like a reasonable business risk. Looking back these deals were sold on projections and not on established facts. End result BBL went out of business and the CEO off to jail.

A few years later I go into Bonds backed by the Mello Roos Act, again weak on disclosure and level of risk. Again, the Mello Roos Bonds were promoted on future happenings not projects in place.

To sum up it has been my experience over 25 years in Muni Bond investing that the industry has to have a uniform set of rules for all Brokerages regardless of size of the firm or size of the issue.

Understandably, Brokerage Houses have various means of motivation and self interest. Some of the sales people are on commission or a sales quota or pressure to close out a given month quarter or year. The retail customer's interest does not necessarily come first.

I strongly believe there should be a specific check list of information every retail purchaser should have given by the broker before accepting his order. Items should include level of risk on a better scale than the alphabet method, size of issue, overview of where the funds are going, where the interest income is coming from, date of last prior sale and amount of that sale, lien to value, and other pertinent information. The commission markup should be shown as a separate item on the billing. The goal of all this is transparency and fair value to the investor.

Retail Brokerage overhaul and transparency has long been an issue with me and I am more than happy to be here today and to be part of this program.

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