

millions of dollars worth of property in Florida.

Using the laundered loan proceeds, Optima acquired the following Cleveland buildings:

One Cleveland Center: 1375 E. 9th St. Acquired for \$86.3 million in May, 2008.

55 Public Square. Acquired for \$34 million in July, 2008.

Huntington Building: 925 Euclid Ave. Acquired for \$18.5 million in June, 2010.

AECOM/Penton Media Building: 1300 E. 9th St. Acquired for \$46.5 million in August, 2010.

Crowne Plaza Building: 777 St. Clair Ave. Acquired in a joint venture with Denver-based Sage Hospitality Group.

Here's an example of exactly how the properties were acquired, via the complaint:

On April 29 and 30, 2008 . . . two Ukrainian [metal plants] owned or controlled by [Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov] drew down \$2.7 million and \$4.3 million in loan proceeds from PrivatBank Ukraine. The purpose of the loans was "financing of current business activities of the entity." On April 30, 2008, Bocatoro Enterprises Ltd. ("Bocatoro Enterprises"), a Cypriot entity owned or controlled by [Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov] drew down \$40 million in loan proceeds from PrivatBank Cyprus for "replenishment of floating assets for payments according to contracts, including purchase of shares."

However, the loan proceeds were not used for their stated purposes. Instead, the loan proceeds were combined with funds from other sources linked to [Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov] and laundered in forty-two transactions through fifteen Laundering Accounts, including the accounts of Defendant Kolomoisky's Divot Enterprises, Ralkon Commercial, and Pavanti Enterprises, as well as Defendant Bogolyubov's Bonique, and [K&B's] Blisont Capital and Brotstone accounts.

On information and belief, [K&B] and their co-conspirators used Pavanti Enterprises to misappropriate and transfer a combined \$36.1 million into the U.S. to the Multi-State Title Agency Ltd. to fund the acquisition of One Cleveland [Center] through Optima One Cleveland Center LLC for Optima Ventures.

At its height, Optima Ventures controlled 2.8 million square feet of downtown Cleveland commercial real estate. This was a larger footprint than even Forest City Enterprises at the time.

In recent years, Optima has been selling off its Cleveland properties, most of which have fallen into disrepair and suffer from high vacancy rates.

The AECOM building, for example, which Optima acquired in \$46.5 million in 2010, was sold to New-Jersey based Rugby Realty last summer for \$38 million. When Optima bought AECOM (the former Penton Media Building), it was 90-percent occupied. But when Rugby purchased it last year, it had dropped to only 57-percent occupancy and was in need of significant renovations.

"We'll fully renovate the lobby so it fits the 21st century and doesn't look like the 1980s," Rugby principal Robert Ades said at the time of purchase. Rugby's plans also included updating the elevators, the mechanical components of which reportedly dated back to 1972.

The Huntington Building (The 925 Building) was sold to Frank Sinito's Millennium Companies last year for \$40 million. A full overhaul of the building was projected to cost \$300 million. The property was characterized by the PD at the time of sale as a "gaping hole in the heart of a revitalizing downtown."

A situation of disrepair and vacancy can also be found at 55 Public Square, the only building other than One Cleveland Center that remains in Optima's local ownership portfolio.

A sale was in the works with K&D development last year, but K&D pulled out, calling the project "unworkable." Though Optima had purchased it for \$34 million in 2008, it was appraised for only about \$20 million last year. The Plain Dealer reported that the building was "in dire need of a makeover" and that "only a smattering" of businesses occupied the 2nd through 11th floors of the 22-story structure. The John Q Steakhouse space on the ground floor has been vacant for years.

Optima retains a management stake in what is now the downtown Westin Hotel (formerly the Crowne Plaza) and owns One Cleveland Center, which it refinanced in 2010. Optima Management Group, the management company affiliated with Optima Ventures, also works out of One Cleveland Center.

Scene spoke with a representative there by phone, who asked that questions for Chaim Schochet about the so-called "Optima Schemes" be submitted via email. Schochet provided the following via Optima Management Group late Tuesday afternoon:

The allegations in this lawsuit—part of an orchestrated political attack by a Ukrainian bank against investors in our thriving businesses—are false, defamatory and utterly without merit. We intend not only to contest but to disprove these reckless allegations, and to demonstrate that they are part of a smear campaign driven by a Ukrainian political agenda that we have nothing to do with. We are immensely proud of our extensive track record building a vibrant real estate portfolio in Cleveland, and we will not let a frivolous lawsuit tarnish our hard-earned reputation or distract us from our mission to continue to serve the interests of the Cleveland community.

Filed on behalf of the current PrivatBank shareholders, the Delaware complaint seeks damages which could include all of Optima's U.S. assets. Those include properties in Dallas and Louisville and metallurgical assets in addition to the Cleveland portfolio. Among the metallurgical assets that Optima Acquisitions acquired was a steelmaking plant in Warren, Ohio, called Warren Steel Holdings LLC. Warren Steel shuttered permanently in 2016 and laid off 162 workers due to "unforeseeable business circumstances."

Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov are now back in Ukraine after having fled from their residences in Switzerland to Israel in 2018. Both oligarchs reportedly have Ukrainian, Israeli and Cypriot citizenship.

The Daily Beast reported in April that Kolomoisky is under FBI investigation and that the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Northern District of Ohio was involved in a wide-ranging probe. Kolomoisky's lawyer said that his client "categorically denied" laundering any money into the United States.

Kolomoisky has reportedly returned to Ukraine, however, with the tacit protection of new president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a comedian who played the Ukrainian President on the TV show *Servant of the People* (now streaming on Netflix).

That show, immensely popular in Ukraine, aired on a network owned by Kolomoisky.

□ 1030

LEGALIZE BANKS WORKING WITH CANNABIS-RELATED BUSINESSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Ms. KENDRA S. HORN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KENDRA S. HORN of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk

about H.R. 1595, the SAFE Banking Act. Later today, we will consider this important piece of right-sized, pragmatic legislation that tackles problems facing our communities.

H.R. 1595, the SAFE Banking Act, is a bipartisan bill that confronts a problem that has arisen from the conflict between State and Federal law and is currently endangering communities, as well as inhibiting small businesses from growing.

Currently, 33 States, including my home State of Oklahoma, have passed some form of legalized cannabis. However, due to the schedule I status in Federal law, it is illegal for banks across this country to work with cannabis and cannabis-related businesses, even in States where it has been legalized.

This prevents businesses from using banks to deposit their revenue, pay their bills, finance capital improvement projects, and makes it challenging for them to file their taxes.

This has also created a serious safety hazard for cannabis and cannabis-related businesses by forcing them to hold on to large amounts of cash on their premises and increases the likelihood of tax evasion, which has been historically prevalent among cash-only businesses.

The SAFE Banking Act resolves these issues by creating a legal pathway for banks to serve cannabis and cannabis-related businesses without fear of Federal sanctions.

Importantly, this bill defends States' rights by allowing banks in States where cannabis is legal to serve these businesses, but does not force banks to serve them and does not force it in States where it is illegal.

Last year, Oklahoma legalized medical cannabis, and, since then, Oklahoma's industry has become one of the fastest growing in the Nation. Just this past April, Oklahomans spent more than \$18 million on medical cannabis, and the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority has licensed 1,400 dispensaries and 2,700 commercial growers in the State.

This industry is bringing revenue to our State, creating small businesses, and helping those who suffer with physical illness to relieve their ailments. The SAFE Banking Act supports this growing Oklahoma industry, our banks, and works to keep Oklahomans that work in and around this industry safe.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this pragmatic legislation that makes our community safer, protects States' rights, supports small businesses, and grows our economy.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 32 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR) at noon.

PRAYER

Dr. J.D. Greear, The Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, offered the following prayer:

Almighty Father, we ask You for Your help in guiding the affairs of this great Nation. We acknowledge that you have appointed governments for the promotion of peace, for the preservation of justice, and the protection of liberty. We recognize that the wisdom to accomplish these things comes only from You.

May You grant that this body rule in a way that directs the men, women, and children of this country towards Your goodness, and enables them to respond in thankfulness to You, knowing that each of us must give an account for our decisions and our actions to You.

May we perceive the love that You have for us, and may that translate into love for one another, especially the most vulnerable.

Finally, may we recognize that all of this comes as a gift from You, embodied in Jesus Christ, who was punished for our sin and raised to life so that we could find new life in Him.

It is in His name that I pray.
Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING DR. J.D. GREEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, you have just heard from a man, J.D. Greear, that I have the distinct privilege of calling my friend.

Pastor J.D. Greear leads The Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina. Under Pastor J.D.'s leadership, The

Summit Church has gone from 300 members to over 10,000, making it one of the fastest growing churches in our country.

His vision is to plant 1,000 new churches around the world by the year 2050.

He believes the deeper we dive into the extravagant love of Christ, the more our lives will be filled with unquenchable joy, reckless generosity, and audacious faith.

Pastor J.D. is the author of several life-transforming books and is the current president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

One of his most important accomplishments is his dedication to his wife, Veronica, and their four children.

It is an honor to have him here in Washington, D.C., today. He is also the mentor of my pastor, Andrew Hopper.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to his continued work as a father, as a pastor, and as a leader.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

AN IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY IS NECESSARY

(Mr. HIGGINS of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, with each passing day, we see an erosion of this country's ideals by a President who freely sidesteps Congress, profits off his position, obstructs justice, and places personal petty politics before national security.

The validity of these violations is not in question. They are happening before us.

The Intelligence inspector general, who was appointed by President Trump, said that the whistleblower complaint is of both urgent concern and credible, and its public release is the National Intelligence director's obligation to the American people.

An impeachment inquiry is necessary to protect the values included in our Constitution and to deliver the truth Americans deserve.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

SANDHILL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, each August, I participate in a bus tour of South Carolina's Second Congressional District with my wife,

Roxanne, and dedicated staff from the Washington and district offices.

This year, the tour took us to the Clemson University Sandhill Research and Education Center in Columbia. The Sandhill Research and Education Center plays a vital role in the growth of statewide agribusiness.

We were welcomed by long-time friend, Director Kathy Coleman.

During the visit, we heard updates from faculty members Cory Heaton, Adam Kantrovich, and Nathan Smith on their research in agribusiness programming, which promotes President Donald Trump's policies of farm exports.

We learned from farm manager Cody Bishop of the incubator program, which provides small plots for startup farmers to begin growing their business.

The visit was jointly hosted with the South Carolina Farm Bureau. We were welcomed by David Wilson, Gary Spires, and Charles Wingard.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

INVESTIGATE FORMER VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN AND HIS SON, HUNTER BIDEN

(Mr. LAMBORN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for an investigation into former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter Biden, for their unethical and potentially criminal actions in Ukraine.

In 2014, after being discharged from the Navy for cocaine use, Hunter Biden was named a board member of Burisma Holdings. Burisma is a natural gas company that was being investigated by the Ukrainian Government for corruption.

This strange hire for a million dollars a year was around the same period that Vice President Joe Biden was the primary American liaison to Ukraine, supposedly assisting their new government in combating corruption.

Just last year, Joe Biden bragged to the Council on Foreign Relations that he threatened the Ukrainian Government while vice president with the loss of a billion dollars unless they fired the prosecutor general leading the ethics probe into Hunter Biden, or America would cut off that foreign aid.

Talk about quid pro quo.

It is clear: Democrats would rather smear President Trump than investigate Biden's corrupt bullying of the Ukrainian Government.

AFFORDABLE HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS

(Mr. BUDD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)