

THE SCRANTON STEAL: A REAL ESTATE SHELL GAME & THE TAXPAYER RIP-OFF

An Explosive Investigation

[Opening Scene]

(Dramatic music, fast-paced clips of Scranton cityscape, courtroom sketches, and images of Scran's property at 1000 N. South Road, along with SimpleCiti Holdings logo/assets.)

Narrator (Grave Tone):

*"A tax loophole. A real estate empire playing both sides. And a maneuver that secured a half-million-dollar windfall—while taxpayers footed the bill. Tonight, we investigate how **Scran LLC and its legal team slashed their tax burden by half a million dollars—arguing their property was worth far less—securing a \$500,000 tax break—only to turn around and push for a sale at more than double that value.** Now, recent developments could put Scran on the hook for repaying its tax break—with penalties—and raise serious questions about the attorneys involved in the process."*

[Scene 1: The Scranton Tax Reduction Deal]

(Clips of court documents, property tax records, and interviews with financial analysts.)

Narrator:

"Scran LLC, managed by Samuel and Shervin Mehdizadeh of SimpleCiti Holdings, submitted to court that their property was worth just \$6.675 million—ultimately winning a tax reduction of over \$500,000. But at the same time, records show they were actively marketing the very same property for a \$13.5 million sale."

(Cut to images of Scranton's underfunded schools, aging infrastructure.)

Narrator:

"This wasn't just an accounting trick. It meant less money for Scranton's schools, emergency services, and taxpayers. And now, regulators could demand that Scranton pay back every dollar of that tax break—with interest and penalties."

Narrator:

"Could tax authorities investigate Scranton over its valuation practices? That hinges on one critical question: Did Scranton intentionally present an artificially low valuation to slash their taxes—while quietly pursuing a sale at nearly double that value behind closed doors?"

[Scene 2: The Legal Team Behind the Deal]

(Visual of Duane Morris LLP's logo and legal filings.)

Narrator:

"Scranton didn't do this alone. The deal was orchestrated by Duane Morris LLP, a top-tier law firm. Their tax litigation specialist, Gerald J. Schirato Jr., led the effort to reduce Scranton's property taxes based on a lower valuation. Meanwhile, another attorney from the same firm, Daniel Mita, was reportedly facilitating the sale—at a far higher price."

(Visual of key legal documents, 19-CV-6733, 22-CV-2079, with Duane Morris LLP's name.)

Narrator:

"Two attorneys from the same firm—working on opposite sides of a six million-dollar valuation gap. Were they simply doing their jobs, unaware of each other's work for the same client? Or did their roles intersect—one securing a tax reduction based on an undervalued fair market value, while the other facilitated a sale at more than double that amount?"

[Scene 3: The Paper Trail That Raises Questions]

(Dramatic zoom-in on legal filings, timestamps, and court orders.)

Narrator:

"May 25, 2021: Scran's tax reduction is finalized and formally approved. But even as the ink dries, Scran is actively negotiating a sale at nearly twice the value they swore to the court. What are the chances that neither Schirato nor Mita—both from the same firm—had any clue about these parallel dealings?"

(Cut to an expert in legal ethics and real estate law.)

Expert:

"This isn't a small discrepancy. The valuation difference is enormous, and it raises legal and ethical questions. If Scran misrepresented its property value, tax authorities could force them to repay the entire tax reduction—plus interest and fines that could run into the millions."

(Graphic of state and federal tax fraud statutes, zooming in on penalties.)

Expert (cont'd):

"The attorneys involved also have obligations. If the attorneys were aware of conflicting valuations, it could raise ethical concerns, be subject to review, and potentially lead to professional discipline or legal scrutiny. If tax authorities investigate, Scran will likely be the primary target, but the lawyers' role won't go unnoticed."

[Scene 4: The Whistleblower Evidence Emerges]

(Dramatic black-and-white overlay of official court orders and signed agreements.)

Narrator:

"What we do know is this: Gerald J. Schirato Jr. signed off on Scrان's tax reduction in May 2021. At the same time, his colleague, Daniel Mita, was reportedly facilitating a sale worth more than \$13 million. If both attorneys had knowledge of these parallel dealings, it raises a troubling question—was the lower valuation used for tax reduction purposes while the higher one was pursued without disclosure to the court?"

(Clip of Scranton City Hall, overlaid with "INVESTIGATION UNDERWAY.")

Narrator:

"And now, a whistleblower has stepped forward with what they claim is explosive evidence—emails between Scrان, Shervin Mehdizadeh, Duane Morris attorneys, and their lobbyists and consultants. The emails reportedly confirm internal discussions about the conflicting valuations—conversations that may be key in determining intent."

(Graphic of emails with subject lines: "Assessment Reduction Strategy" and "Pending Sale Valuation" zooming in.)

Narrator:

"The whistleblower has reportedly already turned over this evidence to officials. If there was any doubt before, these emails raise serious questions that officials may now be examining."

[Scene 5: The Investigations Begin]

(Close-up shot of stacks of documents stamped "SUBPOENAED"—papers flipping, key phrases like "Tax Appeal Filings," "Internal Communications," and "Market Valuation Reports" highlighted.)

(Split-screen: Scranton City Hall and the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, overlay text:

"ACTIVE INVESTIGATION UNDERWAY.")

Narrator:

"The fallout is escalating. Law enforcement agencies are combing through Scran's financial records, tax filings, and court submissions, building a case to determine the full extent of the possible deception. And Duane Morris LLP? Their involvement is now under the microscope. With whistleblower evidence in hand and subpoenas in motion, investigators are closing in—looking for the smoking gun that could turn this case into a full-blown legal reckoning, whether civil, regulatory, or beyond."

(Cut to Tax Assessment Investigation Counsel.)

Tax Assessment Investigation Counsel:

"In a standard audit, this alone would raise major red flags. But when you factor in the legal filings, tax adjustments, and the nearly simultaneous sale negotiations? Regulators, prosecutors, and taxing authorities are going to be asking serious questions. If intent to mislead can be demonstrated, criminal tax fraud becomes a possibility."

(Clip of Scranton residents demanding action.)

Narrator:

"Will there be consequences? With whistleblower evidence now in officials' hands, the paper trail is clear—Scran, its legal representatives, and consultants were all in the loop. Investigators aren't just asking if something was wrong—they're examining who knew what, and when."

(Close-up of a courtroom door slamming shut.)

[Final Scene: The Reckoning Begins]

(Bold white text against a black background, dramatic music intensifies.)

"THE PAPER TRAIL IS EXPOSED."

"THE WHISTLEBLOWER EVIDENCE IS IN."

"WHO WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?"

(Fade to black.)

[Closing Scene]

(Anchor sitting at a desk, looking directly at the camera.)

Anchor:

"The walls are closing in. With damning evidence now in the hands of investigators, the question isn't whether Scran, SimpleCiti Holdings, and their attorneys knew—it's what consequences they'll face. If you have information about this unfolding scandal, we want to hear from you. Visit [INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING WEBSITE] to submit a tip. Stay with us as we track the fallout and uncover the next chapter in this case."

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