

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islanders Allege \$365K Fraud in \$1M Home Build; Contractor Accused of Billing Scheme and Lacking Active License

A St. Thomas couple claims Noble Builders overcharged them by \$365,000 on a million-dollar home project through padded invoices and unauthorized expenses, all while operating without an active business license; they are suing for fraud and other damages.

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Two Virgin Islanders say they were fleeced by their building contractor on a residential construction project on St. Thomas. In a lawsuit filed on Monday, Andrew & Katie Prins accuse Noble Builders LLC and David Strobel, the company's principal, of overcharging

and cutting corners on their million-dollar build.

The business relationship began in January 2024 when the couple agreed to the price sheet presented by Noble Builders, the civil complaint states. The sheet outlined the prices, terms, and markups for the work that was to be done, and created a contract between the parties, the lawsuit sets forth.

During the construction process, however, Noble Builders allegedly took advantage of the Prins's relative ignorance of the industry to perform unnecessary, inferior work, pad invoices, and inflate costs, among other alleged fraudulent practices.

The complaint alleges that labor was wrongfully marked up by 25%, but when the issue was pointed out, the builders attributed it to a clerical error. Noble Builders's "explanation that this was not fraud, but an inadvertent accounting error, is not credible, given that they are professionals who supposedly accidentally gave themselves a substantial, six-figure windfall," the complaint states.

This supposed error was compounded by mischarging expenses for another project to the homeowners, unauthorized travel being billed to the couple, failing to keep proper timesheets for workers, adding markups to materials purchased by the clients, and misuse/wastage of materials, among other allegations — all of which added up to additional unjustified expense.

Having paid a million dollars to the builders between January and October 2024, the couple is now claiming at least \$365,000 in losses due to the various overcharges they have allegedly been subjected to.

Mr. Strobel is being sued in his personal capacity, the Prins couple says, because Noble Builders does not exist as a duly registered business in the territory. Indeed, records in the Division of Corporations and Trademarks indicate that the registration of Noble Builders was administratively cancelled in 2021, while the entity Noble Builders, LLC was administratively dissolved in 2023.

The plaintiffs allege fraudulent misrepresentation, negligent misrepresentation, constructive fraud, negligence, breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty, breach of the implied good faith and fair dealing covenant, violations of the VI Consumer Protection Act, unjust enrichment, conversion, and debt against Noble Builders and Mr. Strobel, and have asked the court to award compensatory, punitive and other damages should a jury find in their favor.

As of press time, the named defendants have not yet filed a response to the complaint.