



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on April 14, 2010

Congressman's Son to Take on Rangel

The son also rises-again. New York Assemblyman Adam Clayton Powell IV, son of a legendary congressman from Harlem, announced on Monday that he would take on twenty-term incumbent Charles Rangel in the Democratic primary for the 15th district congressional seat.

It was Rangel's primary victory over Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. 40 years ago that brought to an end the long career of the flamboyant Democratic Congressman. The younger Powell ran against Rangel 16 years ago and lost by nearly two to one. But Rangel may be more vulnerable in this year's race, since a House Ethics Committee investigation into charges of misconduct has led to his resignation as chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee.



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"The fact that he is no longer chairman is significant," Powell, 47, said at his Harlem press conference. "If he were still chairman, I might not be running." The Ethics Committee admonished Rangel for accepting corporate-sponsored trips to the Caribbean and continues to investigate allegations that he failed to pay federal taxes on rental income from a home he owns in the Dominican Republic and made personal use of several rent-controlled apartments provided by a Manhattan real estate developer. Powell is the second challenger so far to announce for the seat, following Vince Morgan, a banker and former campaign manager for Rangel, into the fray. The *New York Times* reported that State Senator Bill Perkins and Assemblyman Daniel J. O' Donnell are also considering their potential candidacies.

Ironically, it was political scandal that made Powell's father vulnerable to Rangel's 1970 primary challenge. Elected in 1944 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. was the first African-American Congressman from the state of New York and was a leader in the fight for civil rights legislation and for desegregation of facilities in the Capitol itself, making a point of eating in the dining room designated for whites. A hero to African-Americans and virtually unbeatable in his district, he ran into trouble with his colleagues over trips taken at government expense, including frequent vacations at his retreat at Bimini in the Bahamas Islands. The chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, he was accused of appropriating committee funds for his personal use. His third wife, Yvette Diago, admitted to a congressional committee that she had been on the congressman's payroll from 1961-67, though she moved back to Puerto Rico in 1961 and had not worked for the office. The House stripped Powell of his chairmanship, then voted to expel him, 307-116. He later won reelection and the Supreme Court ruled the House expulsion was unconstitutional. In their 1970 contest, Rangel emphasized Powell's absenteeism, as the congressman was reportedly spending much of his time in Florida.

Adam Clayton Powell IV (He has a half-brother who is Adam Clayton Powell III) said he was not running



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to avenge his father's defeat by Rangel 40 years ago. That was something he had "gotten out of my system" when he ran against Rangel in 1994, he said. Surrounded by supporters waving campaign signs that promised, "Change is Coming," Powell said it was "time to turn the page" on Rangel's tenure in Congress. "We must honor the past, but it's time for change," he said. He claimed Rangel, who will turn 80 in June, planned to win reelection and then resign so he could name his successor. "That would be the height of an undemocratic process," Powell said. It would also be impossible under New York law, Rangel's campaign manager, Kevin Wardally, told the Associated Press. The governor is required to call a special election to fill a congressional vacancy.

"(Rangel) can't just hand it to someone. That's not the way it works," he said.

Claiming Rangel is a part of the insider "clubhouse" politics in Washington, Powell proclaimed himself "a man of the people." Powell, who was born in Puerto Rico and speaks Spanish fluently, may benefit from demographic changes in the district, which is now nearly half Hispanic. But he has a few scandals of his own to deal with, including a 2008 arrest for drunk driving, resulting in a suspension of his driver's license. A jury acquitted him last month, but convicted him of the lesser charge of driving while impaired, the *Times* reported. Powell was also investigated, but not charged, in two sexual assault allegations, according to the Associated Press. At least one East Harlem resident described the coming primary battle as something of an unpopularity contest.

"I believe if the disenchantment with Rangel outweighs Mr. Powell's indiscretions, then they're going to vote him in," Eddie Gibbs told a reporter.

Photo: New York State Assemblyman Adam Clayton Powell IV announced his candidacy for U.S. Congress in New York, April 12, 2010: AP Images



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