



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on April 28, 2010

Rangel Faces Opposition from Powell in Harlem

Congressman Charles Rangel, Chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, surrendered his chairmanship temporarily on March 3 because of a number of ethical violations, which have historically required that the committee Chairman be stripped of his committee. Rangel's problems were serious by any standard.



Rangel failed to report income \$75,000 of rental income on his Caribbean home. The interest on the purchase of this home was also "waived" by the investors and Rangel. In fact, from 1978 to 2006, Rangel failed to report buying, owning, or selling assets 28 times, according to the Sunlight Foundation.

Rangel also dramatically undervalued another residence in Florida, reporting a value as low as \$50,000 on property worth as much as \$500,000. The Congressman also neglected to report to the House assets of \$250,000 in a Congressional Federal Credit Union account, another account containing at least \$250,000, real estate in southern New Jersey, and stock in PepsiCo and Yum!, a fast food company. Rangel stored his Mercedes in the House parking lot for several years, without paying for the storage, as required by House rules. He violated House rules by using congressional stationary to solicit funds for the Charles B. Rangel Center for Public Service.

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Congressman Rangel appears to have violated New York City rent control ordinances by paying only about half the fair market value on four rent-controlled apartments. The long list of ethical problems for the New York Congressman reflects a general indifference to compliance with House rules, federal laws, and local ordinances. Particularly troubling has been the fact that the Member of Congress with the most control over federal tax legislation is, himself, in myriad problems with his taxes.

A February 26, 2010 report issued by the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct found that Rangel had "violated the House gift rule by accepting payment for or reimbursement for travel to the [Carib News Foundation] 2007 and 2008 conferences." But that statement was followed by a mitigating statement that: "The Committee does not find sufficient evidence to conclude ... that Representative Rangel had actual knowledge of the memoranda written by his staff."

On March 3, as noted above, Rangel that he would take a leave of absence as chairman, pending the issuing of the Ethics Committee's reports.

Rangel has been rated on the extreme liberal side of the political spectrum by several organizations over the years. As of 2003 Rangel had an average lifetime 91 percent "Liberal Quotient" from Americans for Democratic Action, but received a score of less than 4 percent from the American Conservative Union. His rating from *The New American's* "Freedom Index" for 2010, was only 10 percent. (The "Freedom Index" is a congressional scorecard based on the U.S. Constitution.)



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Charles Rangel has served 20 terms in Congress, making him one of the most senior members of that body. Rangel entered the national spotlight when he defeated Adam Clayton Powell, the long-time Harlem Congressman who was the first black Congressman from New York (or from any northern state, other than Illinois), in 1970. Powell had his own ethical problems while in the House of Representatives. In 1967, the House voted overwhelmingly to exclude Powell from its membership until the conclusion of its investigation of him.

His son, Adam Clayton Powell IV, has been a politician almost his entire adult life. He was a New York City Councilman from 1991 to 1997 and has been a member of the New York State Assembly since 2001. Assemblyman Powell has been convicted of driving while impaired and has had his driver's license suspended.

Powell is not making much of Rangel's long list of legal problems in his run against the veteran Democrat. Instead, Powell insists that Rangel is running for reelection simply so that he can handpick his successor. Powell also says that if Rangel had not lost his powerful committee chairmanship, then Powell would not be running against him. Power, it seems, is the glue that holds everything together, easily trumping honor or decency. The New York congressional district that has had two very ethically challenged Representatives in the last six decades looks likely to have another Representative who enters congressional service with a cloud over his head.

See also: [Congressman's Son to Take on Rangel](#)

Photo: Rep. Charles Rangel greets Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner (not shown) before a ceremony honoring the 2009 World Series champions New York Yankees in the East Room of the White House, April 26, 2010: AP Images



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