



Charles Rangel Censured for Ethics Charges

On Thursday, Democrat Charles Rangel became the 23rd member of Congress to be censured for violating House ethics rules after the House voted 333-79 on the resolution. Considered the harshest punishment for rule-breakers in Congress, the censure entails having the violator stand in the well of the House for an oral rebuke that is ready by the House Speaker.



Ilona Nickels, an expert on congressional affairs, described the censure as follows:

Saying youve brought disgrace to the House of Representatives, youve discredited the institution you serve in. You have impugned the integrity of our proceedings. Youre a disgraceful person. And youre going to stand in the well of the House and were going to read these charges against you and were going, in essence, to say, "Shame on you."

In an effort to avoid the public humiliation, Rangel angled for a reprimand, a virtual slap-on-the-wrist. Rangel campaigned for a lesser penalty, even distributing a document entitled *Ten Reasons Why Charles B. Rangel Should Not Receive Censure*. Rangel attempted to make the case that his actions were not censure-worthy, as in corrupt, but were rather sloppy, or even stupid.

He defended his request by citing statements made by Blake Chisam, chief counsel for the ethics committee, who contended that he could not detect corruption or self-enrichment in Rangel's actions. I ask for fairness. Never before in the history of this House has someone had to suffer the humiliation of a censure when it is abundantly clear that the counsel of the committee found no evidence of corruption or self-enrichment.

Likewise, Rangel's supporters in the House attempted to reduce the sentence to a written reprimand, but the proposal was rejected by a vote of 146-267.

According to the *Congressional Quarterly*, most Republicans voted against the reprimand vote, with the exception of Republicans Peter King (N.Y.), Ron Paul (Texas), and Don Young (Alaska) voting in favor of reprimand. In addition to the Republicans, 105 Democrats voted against the reprimand.

King explained his decision to vote against his Party, asserting that neither Rangel's actions nor historical precedent warranted the censure:

Why are we departing so significantly from tradition and precedent in the case of Charlie Rangel? Reflect upon not just the lifetime of Charlie Rangel, but more importantly, the 220-year history of tradition and precedent of this body.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 3, 2010

Nevertheless, the censure votes had it. As noted by *TNA* writer Bob Adelman, The delicious irony of censure is that the reading of the motion to censure will be by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a close friend of Rangel's and one who has stalled and delayed the ethics investigation for years.

In addition to the verbal scolding involved in the censure, *Congressional Quarterly* explains, The censure resolution also orders Rangel to pay unpaid taxes on income received from his property in the Dominican Republic and provide proof of payment to the House ethics panel.

After the charges were presented, Rangel addressed his colleagues: I want to make sure that this body knows it never entered into my mind to enrich myself or do violence to the integrity of the House. In my heart, I know that I will be judged by my life and my contributions to society.

After he spoke, both Republican and Democratic House members rose in Rangel's defense, asserting censure as an unprecedented punishment for Rangel's actions.

The sentence is a result of Rangel's unethical operations, which came to the attention of the House Ethics Committee in 2008. Rangel was found guilty of 11 charges of misconduct, which include solicitation of funds from companies engaged in business transaction with the House Ways and Means Committee while Rangel was its chairman, and failure to pay taxes on properties Rangel owned in Florida and in the Dominican Republic.

Just before the vote, Republican Representative Joe Bonner of the ethics committee addressed Rangel, When you go back home this weekend try explaining to your constituents that it's OK for the chairman of the tax-writing committee not to pay his taxes, but not for your constituents to do the same.

Speaking on behalf of the ethics committee, [Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren](#) said, We found his actions an accumulation of actions that reflected poorly on the House and thereby brought discredit to the House. She added, While it is difficult actually painful to sit in judgment of our colleague, it is our duty under the Constitution to do so.

Photo: Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., speaks to the media after he was censured by the House, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday, Dec. 2, 2010: AP Images



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