



Rangel Charged by House Ethics Committee

Yesterday, an investigative subcommittee of the House Ethics Committee, a bipartisan group of 10 Representatives — five Democrats and five Republicans — made known that it will be charging Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) with multiple ethics violations.

The specific charges will not be known until July 29 when an adjudicatory subcommittee of the House ethics panel meets to, as stated by the ranking Republican on the Ethics Committee Jo Bonner (Ala.), “determine whether any counts in the Statement of Alleged Violation have been proved by clear and convincing evidence and to make findings of fact.”

After the announcement the 80-year-old Congressman commented, “I am pleased that, at long last, sunshine will pierce the cloud of serious allegations that have been raised against me in the media” and “I will be glad to respond to the allegations at such time as the Ethics Committee makes them public.”

Despite his cheerful tone, the [New York Post](#) reported that previous to his announcement, “The sharp-tongued Rangel was spotted arguing with Ethics Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.) right before the bombshell charges were announced.” Also noted was the fact Rangel was on the Republican side of the aisle, away from his Democratic confreres.

Melanie Sloan of Citizens for Responsible Ethics in Washington called for his resignation in a [news release](#), saying, “The notoriously lax Ethics Committee has found substantial reason to believe that Rep. Rangel has violated federal law, House rules, or both. Now the question is whether Rep. Rangel will resign or endure a public trial that promises to be filled with detailed and undoubtedly embarrassing revelations of wrongdoing. Rep. Rangel has toughed it out as long as he could, the time clearly has come for him to resign. He can no longer effectively represent the citizens of New York.”

The [Washington Post](#) reported:

Sources familiar with the case said that Rangel could have avoided this showdown by accepting the subcommittee’s findings. He was briefed on the allegations against him — as required by House rules — in recent weeks and he rejected them.

...In March, Rangel reluctantly stepped down as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee — a week after the ethics panel ruled in a separate case that he had broken congressional gift rules by accepting trips to conferences in the Caribbean that were financed by corporate interests. The panel said that, at a minimum, Rangel’s staff knew about the corporate backing for the 2007 and 2008 trips — and that the congressman was therefore responsible.

In a section called “Sleazy Does It,” the [New York Post](#) listed the current possible charges against the Congressman as follows:



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- * Unpaid taxes: Rangel admitted he neglected to pay taxes on \$75,000 in rental income from his villa in the Dominican Republic.
- * Four rent-stabilized apartments: He leased the Harlem units, including one as an office — which is barred by state law.
- * Undisclosed income: He failed to reveal to Congress more than \$600,000 in assets and tens of thousands of dollars in income.
- * Inappropriate fundraising: He wrote letters on official congressional stationery to solicit money to build the Rangel Center at CUNY.
- * Pay-to-play: He preserved a tax shelter for an oil-drilling company, Nabors Industries, whose chief executive donated money to the Rangel Center.
- * Breaking House rules: He stored his vintage Mercedes in the congressional garage.

While Rangel is unlikely to testify at next Thursday's organizational meeting of the ethics subcommittee, he has told reporters he would attend the forum. He announced June 6 he would seek reelection. It is not thought that Rangel's trial will start before his primary; House ethics committee rules prohibit the committee from acting 30 days before a primary and 60 days before an election. He and his lawyers will have at least 15 days to review the allegations against him before any trial commences.

Ken Spain, communications director for the National Republican Congressional Committee, [spoke about some of the fallout that could come from the allegations](#): "This is troubling news not only for Congressman Rangel, but for his most ardent defender — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. For over two years, the Charlie Rangel saga dragged on while Speaker Pelosi not only sat idly by, but encouraged her members to vote against an investigation into the deeply troubling matters at hand. It appears that Charlie Rangel will finally be judged by a jury of his peers, but unfortunately for the Speaker, the verdict is already out on what she promised would be the 'most ethical Congress in history.' "

In the past when commenting upon the behavior of Rangel, Speaker Pelosi has lightly said, "It was not something that jeopardized our country in any way." But now with elections at hand and falling poll numbers, she and other Democrats appear to be putting space between themselves and the embattled Rangel.

Said [Fox News](#):

In a statement that conspicuously lacked any hint of support, Pelosi spokesman Brendan Daly said the action taken against Rangel "would indicate that the independent, bipartisan ethics committee process is moving forward."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., dodged questions on Friday about how pushing the Rangel hearing back into late July and August could adversely affect Democrats in November's elections.

"The ethics process is working," Hoyer allowed.

[The Hill](#), Congress' own daily newspaper, asked in today's "The Big Question": "Will Rep. Charles Rangel survive his ethics scandal and win back his House seat?" TBQ regular contributor and John Birch Society president, John F. McManus, replied:

Only a few days ago, Mr. Rangel introduced a measure in the House seeking to reinstitute a



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military draft. His bill has no co-sponsors. It seems that he is attempting to deflect attention away from his alleged misdeeds with such a move. But the lack of support for his draft proposal likely indicates that his colleagues are distancing themselves from him. He has already stepped down from chairmanship of a powerful House committee, something he would not do if he were innocent of all the charges now facing him.

A few years ago, federal judge Alcee Hastings was impeached by the House, tried and convicted by the Senate, and removed from the bench. Undaunted, Hastings ran for Congress in Florida and won election to the House of Representatives. He serves currently as the congressman for Florida's 23rd district.

Could Charles Rangel survive numerous ethics charges and win reelection? If voters in Florida are willing to sweep a serious matter under the rug for Alcee Hastings and elect him, the possibility surely exists that voters in New York will do likewise for Rangel.

It is sad but true that many voters in America care little about the Constitution and a great deal about getting favors from government. They will overlook plenty in order to get "their" man or woman elected.

Of course, this elect-the-guy-who-is best-at-picking-taxpayers'-pockets approach is largely what has America in its current predicament in the first place. But increasing numbers of American voters appear to be seeing the light. The results will be known in November.

Photo of Congressman Charles Rangel: AP Images



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