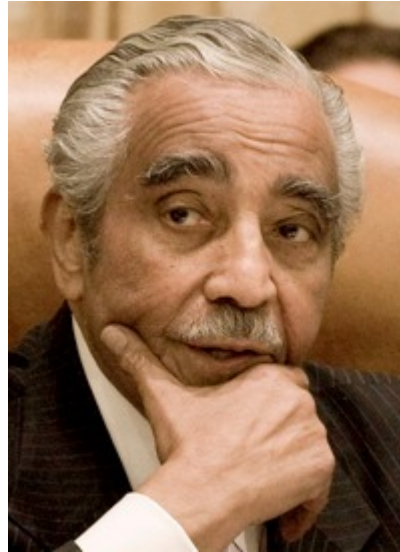




Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on November 30, 2010

Sorry, Charlie, No Reprimand for You

Embattled Harlem Democrat Charles Rangel wants his sentence for various deeds of misconduct reduced from censure to reprimand, holding that censures are only for corrupt politicians, and he's not one of them. A reprimand is considered only a "slap-on-the-wrist" that wouldn't require him even to be present for the House vote, whereas censure would force him to stand in the "Well" of the House and listen to the Speaker read off the list of charges against him in front of his colleagues.



Rangel's ethics and legal violations began surfacing in early 2008 and culminated last week in the report of the House Ethics Committee. The full committee [found him guilty](#) on 11 charges of misconduct. Even though the 10 members of the committee were evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, the committee voted 9-1 in favor of censure. In its conclusion, the committee report stated: "Public office is a public trust [and Rangel] violated that trust."

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Rangel responded by saying the he will ask the committee chairman Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.) for time to defend himself on the floor of the House. That will take some doing not only in light of the overwhelming vote of the committee, but also because the violations noted by the committee include

- improperly soliciting funds and donations from companies doing business with the House Ways and Means Committee while Rangel was its chairman, including Donald Trump, AIG, and Nabors Industries;
- improper use of "Congressional letterhead and other House resources in those solicitations";
- submitting inaccurate and incomplete financial records over many years leaving out various assets such as a checking account with more than \$250,000 in it, several brokerage accounts, stock investments in Yum! Brands, and PepsiCo, at least two properties in New Jersey on which he owed back taxes, and "discrepancies" in the values for property he owns in Sunny Isles, Florida, ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000;
- using one of his Harlem apartments as an office while he had "Congressional dealings" with the landlord; and
- failing to pay taxes on \$75,000 of income from his villa in the Dominican Republic.

In its report, the committee said its decision for censure was based on "the cumulative nature of the



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violations and not any direct personal financial gain.”

As Ilona Nickels, an expert on congressional affairs, [put it](#), censure is

Saying you’ve brought disgrace to the House of Representatives, you’ve discredited the institution you serve in. You have impugned the integrity of our proceedings. You’re a disgraceful person. And you’re going to stand in the well of the House and we’re going to read these charges against you and we’re going, in essence, to say, “Shame on you.”

Writing for *The New American*, author Charles Scaliger [said](#), “Over all, Rangel has been for decades the very embodiment of old school, ham-fisted, corrupt-to-the-bone politics of the sort that is in no small measure responsible for the deplorable state of our federal government. Rangel, like most of his old-school associates, has never scrupled to spend other people’s money freely, and has no more grasp of the Constitution he has sworn (20 times!) to uphold than the street criminals of whose rights he has been so solicitous over the years.”

Typical of the man, Rangel walked out of the ethics subcommittee meeting as his convictions were being read, and then claimed that his rights to due process had been denied: “How can anyone have confidence in the decision of [the committee] when I was deprived of due process rights, right to counsel and was not even in the room?”

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. She might, if she knew the Creator, even be saying: “There but for the grace of God go I.”

On November 2, Rangel was reelected to his House seat once again, with 80 percent of the vote.

Photo of Charles Rangel: AP Images



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