

WHERE IS THE OUTRAGE

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It has been argued that the House Ways and Means Committee is the most powerful committee in Congress. The duties charged of the committee are to write tax legislation, and other bills that affect Social Security, Medicare and other entitlement programs. This committee wields the mighty power of our 67,204 page tax code. The committee chairperson is, by default, one of the most powerful individuals in our government. That person is Charles Rangel D-NY.

This past summer, Charles Rangel made news when it was discovered that his family just so happened to live in four rent-stabilized apartments in New York City. One of the "apartments" was used as a campaign office which is not legal. Rangel was also caught using his congressional stationery in order to solicit donations for an "academic center" to be named of course, after him at the City College of New York.

One would think that if you are the almighty overlord of all things tax, you would be able to file your own tax forms correctly. Not in the case of Charles Rangel. The *New York Post* discovered that for 20 years, Harlem Rep. Charles Rangel has owned a beachfront villa in a sun-drenched Dominican Republic resort, yet has only **sporadically** declared income on the property in federal filings. What do you think would happen to you or me if we decided to declare income sporadically.

While the villa was rented to paying guests for the past two years, for instance, Rangel reported no income from it in 2006 and 2007. As a congressman, failure to fully list all income and investments can result in civil penalties or criminal charges. His three-bedroom, three-bath villa, which can accommodate three couples, is rented for between \$500 in the low season to \$1,100 a night in the busiest tourist season and is one of the resort's most popular, managers and staff say.

"You are requesting the best casita on the beach," a reservations manager told a *Post* reporter posing as a customer. "We are always booked solid on that one between December 15 and April 15. It is always the first one to go," he said. The owners of the casitas earn 80 percent of any rental income, staff said. But Rangel's financial disclosure forms, which members of Congress must file annually to the clerk of the House of Representatives, checks "none" for income from the property in 2006 and 2007.

"I have not received any rental income," Rangel said when asked about the villa the last week in August. "There wasn't any income."

A week later, Chairman Rangel changed his mind.

Charles Rangel of New York admitted he has underpaid his taxes by. Republicans are demanding that he step down as chairman pending an Ethics Committee investigation (FAT CHANCE). His lawyer says Mr. Rangel flubbed his tax return by failing to record some \$75,000 of rental income he received from a beach house he owns at a posh Dominican Republic resort. Mr. Rangel professes to have made an honest mistake, and says "*I personally feel that I have done nothing morally wrong.*" He explained that he didn't know how much income he received from the property because his Dominican business partners would "*start speaking Spanish.*"

That's just the tip of the iceberg. The Associated Press is reporting on a few more discrepancies...

Rangel's papers over the past 10 years show no reference for the sale of a home he once owned on Colorado Avenue in Washington.

The details of a property bought in Sunny Isles, Fla., are bewildering at best. The stated value changes significantly from year to year, and even page to page, from \$50,000 to \$100,000 all the way up to \$500,000.

Some of the entries for investment funds fluctuate strangely, suggesting that the person either didn't have accurate information or didn't fill out the paperwork correctly.

I want everyone to remember that one. Next time you have the IRS giving you the proverbial proctologist treatment. Blame it on the language barrier.

Just contemplate this...The nation's *numero uno* tax writer can't figure out what to declare as income, and what not to declare, how can the rest of us be expected to get it right?

Not that the IRS will show Joe Taxpayer any mercy. In most disputes over even honest mistakes, the tax collectors presume guilt. Mr. Rangel is also one of those who like to denounce corporations that shield income overseas. He'd better hope both the IRS and his House colleagues treat him with more forbearance than he and they treat private citizens or businesses.

This story unfortunately is getting little to no play outside the New York metropolitan area. For all the scandals that the media likes to jump on and beat into the ground that more often than not have to do with sexual proclivities which don't affect us in any way, shape, or form, we finally have one that is actually worthwhile and grand articulation of Washington hypocrisy, and it gets back paged.

I don't know whether to feel enraged or just sad.