

The reality is that for too many in the world today Cubans are supposed to be content with their lot, to be quiet; to, in the words of one of our colleagues in this Congress recently, to move on. The regime that enslaves a Nation and imprisons hundreds of heroes simply for their beliefs deserves unilateral rewards and concessions, many argue, such as more travel or dollars. But Dr. Biscet and the many other heroes imprisoned in the Castro brothers' gulag will not be able to be ignored forever. They must be freed. And political parties must be legalized, as well as independent press agencies, and labor unions. And free and fair elections must take place in Cuba.

Many of those imprisoned today, Mr. Speaker, will be democratically elected leaders tomorrow. That is what is going to happen in Cuba tomorrow. Today, as they suffer the most unjust of cruel imprisonment, we here remember and honor them and, once again, demand the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience in the Castro brothers' infernal gulag.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BROUN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROUN of Georgia addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. FLEMING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FLEMING addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CARTER PRIVILEGED RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, today, in fact less than 1 hour to 1½ hours ago, I rose on the floor of this House to bring forward a privileged resolution asking for the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee to step down or be removed until such time as the ethical problems that have been raised about Mr. RANGEL could be addressed by the Ethics Committee and resolved. I did this out of no malice for Mr. RANGEL; but, rather, I did this and have stated publicly that it is important that we raise the level of the ethics standards of this House to a level that was inspired to us by our Speaker. And, if we raise our level of ethics and each individual in this House takes on themselves to stand up for an ethical Congress, we will have an ethical Congress, and maybe the people of the United States will have a greater respect for the individual Members of Congress.

It should be embarrassing and disheartening to every hard-working man

and woman in this House, and the House is full of hard-working men and women on both sides of the aisle, that the American public view us as unethical and maybe worse.

Our approval rating at one time during the last Congress was at 8 percent. They say if your approval rating is below 20 percent, the only people that still like you are your friends and your relatives. Well, at 8 percent, you have got to worry about your relatives. You may not even have them liking you anymore. To me, I looked at that, and I have been in this Congress now for 6 years, starting my 7th year, I know that there are a lot of really fine people in this Congress on both sides of the aisle and I don't think that they deserve that kind of rating. But, quite frankly, the atmosphere that has been created over the last several years has created an atmosphere where people think that we are evil people. And I don't believe that we are evil people, but I do believe that sometimes somebody has to stand up and say, if it isn't right, it isn't right. And I have decided that I am going to do that. And I think I am going to be joined by others who are going to do it, and I hope eventually we are all going to stand up and say: If it isn't right, it isn't right, and I don't care who did it.

But I want to start off by telling you that what happened in this privileged resolution that I brought forward today, which, if it had gone forward in the privileged resolution, we would have had 1 hour of debate on each side to discuss this issue and come to a resolution, just like maybe a jury would come to a resolution in a courtroom back home, where we would hear what is out there, what has been said on this House floor by Mr. RANGEL, what the evidence seems to be; that we would learn about what is going on, and what would be best for the House under these circumstances. But, unfortunately, a procedural occurrence interfered or intervened.

The majority made a motion to table that resolution. The majority prevailed, as they would be expected to with the sizeable majority count that they have in this House, and so that resolution was laid upon the table; which basically means to the average guy that they stuck it aside and we won't take it up. And that is where it is going to stay, I suppose, just as previous resolutions have been tabled and they don't get taken up.

So I have this hour, and hopefully some of my friends will be by as we go through this hour, and we are going to talk about ethics. And I want to first point out this poster right here, which I would hope can be seen.

The Speaker of this House, NANCY PELOSI, on November 8, 2006, made this statement, which was quoted by the Washington Post: "The American people voted to restore integrity and honesty in Washington, D.C., and the Democrats intend to lead the most honest, most open, and most ethical

Congress in history." That is a 200-plus year history of this United States, and the goal of the 110th Congress, the standards set by our Speaker was to be the most open, most ethical Congress, and the most honest Congress in the history of the United States. That is a big package to carry, there is no doubt about that, but it is a goal that we ought to have. I would argue that, since this speech was made, we have made very little progress down that line.

But something else much more recent to what we are doing right now is what the President of the United States said basically just last week: "I campaigned on changing Washington and bottom-up politics. I don't want to send the message to the American people that there are two sets of standards, one for the powerful people, and one for the ordinary folks who are working every day and paying their taxes." That is a quote to CNN by President Barack Obama, February 3, 2009, just last week. I honor our President for that kind of standard that he sets for his administration and for this government.

There are people who would say: Mr. CARTER, you raised these issues about the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, about CHARLIE RANGEL, for political purposes. You did this because you wanted to attack a powerful leader in the House of Representatives, and this is all about politics.

I will point out that I stated when this all started that I first wrote a letter to Chairman RANGEL and asked Chairman RANGEL if he would address the issue of having paid his taxes, if he would address paying his penalties and interest so this would all go away, so he wouldn't be treated by two standards, one standard for the powerful and one standard for the ordinary person. But I got no response from that letter. A copy of that letter was sent to the Speaker of the House, and I got no response there.

And then you ask, why would I stand up and start talking about this stuff? The New York Times on September 14, 2008 pointed out: "Mounting embarrassment for taxpayers and Congress makes it imperative that Representative Charles Rangel step aside as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee while his ethical problems are investigated."

Now, this is one of the most liberal, Democrat leaning newspapers in the country who is saying there are issues in Mr. RANGEL's past that, in their opinion, the editorial page's opinion, would require that he step down while he is being investigated. And that is all I have ever really asked that he do. It might be for just 2 days, 3 days. Who knows how quickly the Ethics Committee will come out with a resolution. It might be a few weeks. But it would look a standard to the American people that would say: You are right, this is not behind closed doors. This is heads up. They are talking about stuff that is

important. And that is why we raise this. So I am going to put those two things out here to start this conversation.

Our President and our Speaker, Democrats both, have made the point that they want to make sure that there is no one standard for the powerful and one standard for the ordinary, but each will be treated fairly. They have set a standard that they will be the most honest, open, ethical Congress in history. They have set a standard, and it has been pointed out by the New York Times that that standard is not being met when it comes to the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

Now, all I am trying to do here tonight, and I am asking others to help me with, is just say to Mr. RANGEL: Mr. RANGEL, I highly respect you. I hope that you would realize what the American people perceive of us as a body because of issues that are being raised by allegedly the most important newspaper in the land. And we think that, for the good of this House, you would step aside, however briefly, until these issues are resolved.

And, quite frankly, that is what this resolution was about today. And I certainly didn't do it in any spirit of meanness. I thought it was the right and the proper thing to do. And so I basically am pleading my case to the American people and to this House in saying that it is important that you understand, I have no ill will against Mr. RANGEL, but I do have ill will about bringing down the ethical responsibility of this House.

□ 2045

I have my friend, Mr. KING from Iowa, who has joined me here. He may have some things to say about the subject of ethics. And we are going to just ride along here. I recognize you for the amount of time you wish to consume.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I very much thank Judge CARTER for bringing up the issue of ethics in this Congress, Mr. Speaker. And it is not an easy thing to raise these issues on the floor of this House. There are pressures in this place that push a person who serves here to conform, to not make waves and to not expose themselves to legislative retaliation. So, there are many Members of this Congress who would think about those things instead of thinking about the standards that we need to uphold in this great deliberative body.

And we are going into the 220th year since the ratification of our Constitution. And it has been a long history in this Chamber with high standards. Of course, there have been disagreements and squabbles along the way. And there have been times back in those days of old when Members came to blows.

We have a different way of approaching things today. And if we look back upon previous Congresses, there have been standards that have been brought forth. I remember a Speaker of the House who saw 74 sets of ethical

charges brought against him, and all in an effort to bring down the Speaker. Finally, to get away from that all, he accepted one of them that could have crossed the line, which melded the whole thing down.

And here we sit today with a dysfunctional Ethics Committee, an Ethics Committee that doesn't take up the issues that come before them. They are there deadlocked. And so, since we have a dysfunctional Ethics Committee, we have a place, Mr. Speaker, to appeal to. And that becomes you, Mr. Speaker, and the echo that comes from here to the American people.

And Judge CARTER has brought this privileged resolution today. It has laid out a whole line of facts as we know them with regard to the activities of the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL). And he has spoken, I think well, to the standards that have been put up by the New York Times, which I previously haven't looked to for a standard, but by the President of the United States, who has said there will be only one set of standards, whether you're powerful or whether you're unpowerful, you have to live to the same ethical standard. And when you see the quote that comes from Speaker PELOSI, November 8, 2006, where she says "the American people voted to restore integrity and honesty in Washington, D.C., and the Democrats intend to lead the most honest, most open and most ethical Congress in history," it's not bearing up very well considering that the Ethics Committee is not taking up issues, and the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee still presides in a time of economic crisis, we all agree, when important bills like the stimulus bill have to be written, and they have to be written in cooperation, and they should be written in a bipartisan fashion, which we missed that train entirely over here, Mr. Speaker. There was no bipartisanship that applied to the bill that came to the floor. And we shall see if there is a conference committee that shows that bipartisanship. But if there is a question, if there is a question of whether it sheds light in an ill way upon this Congress, then it is incumbent upon those who wield some of the most power in this Chamber to step down and allow their name to be cleared or allow the charges to stick, whichever the case may be.

This privileged resolution raises this issue. One might note that there was no debate on the floor of this privileged resolution. There was a motion to table the privileged resolution, and so the only voice to it was the Clerk reading the resolution and the motion to table, which is an undebatable motion. And it was voted down on party lines, Mr. Speaker. I think the public will recognize that when you see ethical questions that are decided upon party lines, especially ethical questions that are difficult to raise because of the relationships, the collegial relationships

that we have between Members here across the aisle, I think they will understand that politics is part of this. And the Ethics Committee is supposed to be above it.

And when it comes time to pay your taxes and report your income, no one should be above that. I agree with Tom Daschle on that point, and I agree with President Obama on that point. I would like to think that the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee agrees as well. But when the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee doesn't understand the convoluted taxes that he has helped to contrive over the years and so therefore can presumably take a pass for failure to pay those taxes, if there is an excuse for the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, then, Mr. Speaker, I would submit who in America is it not an excuse for? If the Ways and Means Chair doesn't understand the taxes and responsibilities well enough, if it was inadvertent, then say so. Bring this out. If it is not inadvertent, I think that also needs to be brought out. I suspect it was inadvertent. But it is still a responsibility.

It is a responsibility of the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, a responsibility of the Secretary of the Treasury, the boss of the IRS, to use TurboTax. And he couldn't get his taxes right, even though he cashed the checks that were reimbursement for the taxes he was to pay. And we are to overlook this because there is only one man in America big enough or smart enough to get us out of this economic crisis that we are in. That would be the Secretary of the Treasury. Apparently there is only one person in America that can wield the gavel over the Ways and Means Committee while we muddle through this economic crisis without having the confidence that all the best interests of the American people are in mind.

These are some of the things that flow into my mind as I watch this, Mr. Speaker. And I yield back to the gentleman from Texas. I thank you for the bringing this to the floor, and I thank you for the privileged resolution.

Mr. CARTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding back. This all started when I raised an issue about Mr. RANGEL's failure to pay his taxes and then his announcing that he had paid his taxes and he will pay penalties and interest if penalties and interest were assessed. That jumped off the page at me, because I'm from one of the best towns in America, Round Rock, Texas. I grew up with Round Rock. It started off with 2,500 people. And now it's a little over 100,000, I guess. I practiced law in Round Rock and was a judge in the community that oversaw Round Rock as part of that Williamson County community. And for more times than I can count, I have been involved in situations where people have had to deal with issues that deal with the IRS.

When I was a judge, we had lots of family cases where we had to resolve

IRS liens and other things that were a part of the division of the property between parties. I used to represent clients. I had one in particular who was constantly having issues with the IRS. And they were putting padlocks on his doors and seizing his bank accounts. And he was calling his CPA, who was a good friend of mine who used to office with me. And we would try to keep him out of trouble.

Now, one of the things that was onerous that came up on every one of these people were the penalties that are assessed by the IRS. And when you fail to pay your taxes for long periods of times, you will have penalties. But let me point out to you, if you don't pay your taxes on April 15, and you choose to pay your taxes on August 15 or October 15, you're going to immediately receive a bill from the IRS for the interest difference between April 15 and October 15 and a penalty for failure to pay on time. That is what happens. That is just as regular as clockwork. And I think all Americans know that that is the way they get treated when they're dealing with the mighty IRS.

So the first question that came to my mind was that he claimed to have paid his taxes way back in I believe August or July, and yet no penalties and interest had been assessed. That I didn't understand. So that is why I wrote him a letter and said, why don't you contact them so we can get this out of the way and ask them to assess penalties and interest? And I received no reply.

And then what I was trying to point out in that by saying that this was not right, as I said, okay, if it's good enough for the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, then it's good enough for every American citizen. And I introduced a bill called the Rangel Rule, which said that if you have missed your taxes and you pay them and you don't want to be assessed penalties and interest for failing to pay on time, write on your form, "Rangel Rule," and you will be excused those penalties and interest. You will have the ability to claim the same kind of treatment that the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, CHARLES RANGEL, seems to be getting from the IRS.

And why would I want to do this? Because look what our President of the United States says. "I don't want to send a message to the American people that there are two sets of standards, one for powerful people, and one for ordinary folks who are working every day and paying their taxes." That is exactly what I have been trying to say with the Rangel Rule. There shouldn't be two standards, one for someone who has been elected and sent up here by the people, and he gets a bigger break than the guy back in his district who runs a garage and doesn't pay his taxes on time, and somebody padlocks his garage and seizes his bank account.

So this is a fairness issue. And it is an ethical issue. But when we had the

statement by NANCY PELOSI about the most honest, open and ethical Congress in history, then we all of a sudden had a lot of things that occurred. I want to go through some of those with you. And the first one I suppose is now almost old news.

"Federal investigators are targeting the Democratic Congressman, 58, for allegedly demanding cash and other favors for himself and relatives, in exchange for using his congressional clout for arranging African business deals." It goes on to talk about Congressman Jefferson of New Orleans and the \$90,000 in cash that was found in his freezer. This was in the Washington Post way back on February 16, 2006.

That popped up just shortly after the Speaker had talked to us about honest, open and ethical. That issue was already up in the previous election. Ultimately, that has never been resolved, although it is in the courts right now. And it certainly will be resolved by the courts, but the people of New Orleans resolved it this year in the election process. Mr. Jefferson was defeated. But he still has the right to be heard in court. And as far as this judge is concerned, he is innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, and the State has the burden of proof of making that proof. I stand behind the standards that the Constitution set for all innocent people. And I stand behind it for Mr. Jefferson. That is the first piece of news we have got.

Here is one from January 4, 2009, last month. A grand jury is investigating how a company that contributed to Richardson's campaign won a lucrative New Mexico State contract. Richardson says he and his administration acted properly, but that the investigation would force a delay in the confirmation process. He was being nominated for Secretary of Commerce. He says he could not, in good conscience, ask the President-elect to delay important Commerce Department work in the face of the economic situation the Nation is facing. And so he withdrew his name for the Commerce Secretary, which was the right thing to do.

But I point out that as we set a standard, reinforced by our new President, bless his heart, I appreciate him for that, and yet these issues pop up today. And we could go on and on. But let's just stop right there. That is two. We got 20 down here, or close to it. Mr. KING, those issues are issues that we've seen and we've known about, and one of them is old and one of them is new. I will yield to you if you would like to make a comment.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Well, yes, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding. And I point out that according to the law, we're innocent until proven guilty. That is according to the law. We have a different set of standards here in the House. It's an ethical standard here in the House. And the House makes its own rules, and the House determines those standards that we must all be upheld to as Members. And I

would point out that even though there was \$90,000 discovered in the gentleman from Louisiana's freezer, the Ethics Committee couldn't quite get to that issue. Apparently it was a little vague for the Ethics Committee. That is a committee that should be able to act quickly, and they should see to it that these kind of things are headed off at the pass, so to speak, and dealt with in an early fashion. But we went through two elections before the voters of Louisiana came around and sent a new individual here to this Congress to represent them. They finally had enough. And I applaud them for that, for making that decision. Sometimes you will find constituents that will conclude that maybe they don't have that much confidence in their Member of Congress, but it's their district, and they see that there are resources coming back to the district, and sometimes they don't want to vote someone out of office. This must have been just enough down there, because it took two elections to end the issue. The Ethics Committee still hadn't acted. The Ethics Committee hasn't acted on Mr. RANGEL. The Ethics Committee is immobilized at this point, Mr. Speaker.

And as the weight of these issues come up, one after another after another, I will submit that it sounds to me as I listen to the echoes through the national media and through the media in this town that we haven't heard the end of this. There are more posters there I know. And I'm of the understanding that there are a number of other individuals who have their own concerns that might have to do with warrants and perhaps subpoenas.

□ 2100

And, again, we've got to clean up this House. If we're going to have the confidence of the American people, then we have to stand on high ethical standards. And justice has to be swift and sure. It doesn't need to be played out until the end, till it becomes such a political liability that your own colleagues on your own side of the aisle will finally say, I'm tired of being associated. It's making me vulnerable. Why don't you please give up the gavel and sit down. That is one way that it does happen. But it becomes a political question instead of an ethical question. It becomes a political question instead of a legal question.

Again, we are held to the highest standards here. And I'll agree with the statement made by the Speaker, and I ask her to hold to this standard, that this be and becomes as honest, as open and as ethical as any Congress in history. That's the standard that we should have. It's not working out quite that way. It was good language when it was used for political purposes in order to win elections. But it's not such good language today when you have this many Members on one side of the aisle with this many national questions hanging out there and so many issues that are challenging us to hold a high

standard here in this House of Representatives.

I appreciate the Rangel rule. I'm a cosponsor of Judge CARTER's bill, the Rangel rule, where if you don't get around to paying your taxes and you decide that your conscience kicks in or you find some money and you want to sign on the return, then the penalty or the interest can be waived, according to the same standards that were there and made available to the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

I looked at the Tim Geithner case, spoke to a few moments earlier, about how he was reimbursed for taxes that he was advised that he owed, and that advice came four times a year. I don't know how often the check came. But he cashed the checks but didn't pay the taxes. And now we have him heading up the Internal Revenue Service.

Now I would think that most of us, Mr. Speaker, have a constituent or two or three that might find themselves in a Federal penitentiary because of failure to pay Federal taxes. That would probably be willful failure to pay Federal taxes. And of those constituents, American people that are in prison, I'm wondering if there's a pass for the Secretary of the Treasury, and if there's a pass for the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, then why wouldn't President Obama pardon everybody that's in the Federal penitentiaries for tax violations?

It seems to me that would be an open, honest, ethical thing to do. If there's going to be only one standard, and if the standard is that if you cheat on your taxes you can hold a government job, why would it not be that same kind of standard that would require, out of the sense of conformity, only one standard, a pardon for all those folks who have violated the same laws that some of the top officials of the administration have essentially admitted to in the public arena?

So let's have one standard. I think the standard should be, enforce the law, as Tom Daschle said about 15 years ago from the floor of the United States Senate. He didn't comply so well with it, but he did say enforce it. So let's follow that. Let's enforce the law. Let's enforce the ethical standards here in the Congress. And if we do that, however painful, however bitter the pills might be, we put it behind us and we can move on and we can do the right thing for the American people.

But this anchor is clattering as it is drug across the floor of this House of Representatives, it's an anchor being drug by the Speaker of the House. It's an anchor that's being drug by the majority leader in the House of Representatives, and it certainly is an albatross around the neck. We need to get to the bottom of this.

The American people need sunlight on all that we do. And let me further submit, Mr. Speaker, that we don't have sunlight on our own finances, not in the fashion that the public can track it. We need to have sunlight on what

we do. We report our income and we report our assets and our liabilities. But there's a gap there. We report in a range. And the ranges, Mr. Speaker, are narrow if it's a little bit of money, but if it's a lot of money then the ranges are wide. Now, I'm going from memory a little bit, but it seems to me there's zero to \$150,000. That might be one category of real estate assets. And then it goes on up, maybe \$150,000 to 350 or \$400,000. Those I am not so clear on. But I am clear on this; once you get over the \$5 million category, then you report your assets or liabilities within a range of between 5 and \$25 million, so there's a \$20 million range. And then you have several categories, so you can stack those categories together. If you're on the low side you might be \$5,000,001 and you might have five different categories of assets like that. So you'd have maybe a minimum of \$25 million in assets in five different categories, or it could be \$25 million in five different categories, \$125 million.

We have seen a Member's net worth go, in a matter of 3 years, from the low six figures to about \$6.5 million dollars. But no one can really track that because we are not required to report the direct dollar amount, and that gives a place for everybody to hide that wants to hide. And I think out of this needs to come a real requirement that we report real assets and real liabilities to the best dollar as we know it and to the best dates that we can produce, and then post it, as we did on the motion to instruct conferees today for the stimulus bill. All of our records, if they're going to be public records, need to be posted in a searchable, sortable, downloadable database so that the public can look in and have sunlight on these kind of finances that raise these kind of questions and maybe, just maybe there would be some good advice coming from somebody across America that would say, hey, Mr. Geithner, pay your taxes, Mr. RANGEL, pay your taxes. That's the message that I think the public would deliver here if we gave them an opportunity to look over our shoulder. We can't even look over our own shoulder because there's protection built into the financial reporting requirements; and it was wrong from the beginning; it's wrong today.

And I'd just say, one standard for all people. I agree with the President, whether you're powerful or whether you aren't powerful, everybody should live by the same standard, and that is enforce the law to the letter, as Tom Daschle said from the floor of the United States Senate.

I yield back to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CARTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding. The best of all worlds would be, in my opinion, if we who are Members of this House, would step up and say, if there's issues raised that cast impropriety upon the House or the individual Member, that they say I'm going to step back until this issue is resolved.

And then I think the conscience of this House should be the Ethics Committee. And I think the conscience of this House, even though that Ethics Committee is exactly equally divided between Republicans and Democrats, I think the world that we would hope this honest, ethical House would live in would be a world where, when you get that heavy responsibility on being on the Ethics Committee, you're willing to say, I'm going to do what we ask juries to do. I'm going to look at and listen to the evidence, and I'm going to make a decision. I'm going to try my dead level best not to deadlock and put off issues, but to resolve issues as they come before me.

It's a heavy burden. I'm not saying it's not. I would admit that. But, you know, when you choose to police yourself, then each individual Member has a duty, to some extent, to police their own personal self.

I will point out that we had two Members, Republicans in the last Congress, John Doolittle and Rick Renzi, both of whom have allegations against them that had not been resolved and, to my knowledge have not been resolved. Both of them chose to step down from their respective committees until the allegations were resolved for the good of the House of Representatives. Now, I'm not saying they're noble and wonderful. I personally think the world of both of them. But the bottom line is, they did what was good for this body. And we've got issues that are getting raised.

It's not my goal in life to tear down this House. I'm telling you, and I tell the American people that might be watching tonight, the people that serve in the House of Representatives are hardworking folks. Right now, here, it's 10 minutes after 8, 10 minutes after 9, excuse me, and there's plenty of people that are working right now, and they started this morning, probably at 6.

So don't think that these aren't hardworking, honest, trying-to-do-the-very-best-they-can people that serve in this House.

And we owe a responsibility to each other not to bring down this House. We have been doing that, by my knowledge, the last 4 years. We have run campaigns, the purpose being to paint the whole House, or at least the whole party in the House, as criminals, as corrupt people, when you're only talking about individuals. Each of these instances we talk about are individual issues, with that individual Member or that individual cabinet appointee or cabinet member. They are not issues of the government as a whole. But the responsibility lies upon those who lead.

Mr. KING was pointing out just a few minutes ago about Timothy Geithner. I have here a copy of the International Monetary Fund receipt that Mr. Geithner signed when he received the money from the International Monetary Fund that he was supposed to pay in taxes. At the bottom it has an admonition and roughly an oath which says,

in accordance with the General Administrative Order Number 5, Revision 7, section 703, I wish to apply for tax allowance of U.S. Federal and State income taxes, and the difference between the self-employed and employed obligations of the U.S. Social Security tax which I will pay on my fund income. I authorize the fund or any of its staff members designated by it for the purpose to ascertain to the appropriate tax authorities whether tax returns were received. I certify that information contained herein is true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I will pay the taxes for which I have received tax allowance payments from the fund. I certify that if any data provided on this application changes, I will immediately report such changes to the fund; and it's signed by the gentleman, Mr. Geithner.

I bring that up because he signed a pledge to this fund that, give me the money and I'll pay my taxes. They gave him the money. It's been reported that one payment was \$32,000. That was reported in the newspapers, and you can take them as a valid source or not take them as a valid source. But back where I come from, \$32,000 is a real pocketful of money and you don't forget \$32,000.

So the issue that was raised is a serious one when the man who is taking us, hopefully, safely down the path to resolve our economic crisis for I believe it's four consecutive years, received the tax money he was supposed to submit to the various taxing entities and he did not do so, and only did so when he was about to be confirmed before the Senate as Secretary of the Treasury.

You know what? That just don't smell right. And I think that's what the folks back home are saying. And I think the President needs to, he has to think about his statement; no difference between the powerful and the ordinary working folks, because it certainly looks like there's a difference in that case.

I don't know the man. I haven't got any reason to be mad at him or to even want him to—I want him to succeed. Why wouldn't we? He's practically got our whole Nation sitting here in the palm of his hands, and we want him to succeed.

But if we're going to talk about what's right, what's ethical and honest and open, we've got to raise these issues. We've got to put sunlight on these issues. And that's what we are doing and what we're going to be doing now and forever, until we get this back to being a Congress that is recognized by the American people as honest and ethical.

□ 2115

I see that my friend Mr. BURGESS is here. He's a good friend from Texas, one of my classmates. We came into this body together. He is a man whom I highly respect. He has a great amount of knowledge about our health care

issues and about health care problems, and I believe that MIKE BURGESS and others will be the people who come up with the solutions.

I will yield whatever time the gentleman wishes to consume.

Mr. BURGESS. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I certainly thank him for his diligence and for his passion on this, and I do understand that he respects and honors the institution of the House of Representatives, and it is that respect and honor that lead him on this journey that sometimes could be difficult and where sometimes people might try to dissuade him, but I am so encouraged by the fact that he has taken up this cause. It is extremely important.

I have constituents who come into my office all the time. Constituent service is a big part of what we do as Members of Congress. Yes, we can help with a lot of things with regard to Federal agencies, but I always tell constituents who come in with tax difficulties that there is nothing that I as a Member of Congress can do to discharge an obligation to the IRS. It is just not within my power to do so.

Well, how does it make me feel when it turns out that that, in fact, is not right?

We have the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and now the Secretary of the Treasury who have told us otherwise, that we can discharge those debts if we just choose to ignore them or, when we're caught, that we can just pay what we owe, and we don't have to pay a fine. We don't have to go back and deal with what other citizens have to deal with when they're caught in this type of difficulty.

I really applaud the judge for bringing forward the Rangel Rule. I know it has achieved a great deal of popularity out in the middle part of the country. It certainly has in my district. People understand that there do seem to be two sets of standards—one for those in charge and one for the rest of us. It has gotten to the point where people are not wanting to put up with that type of mentality any longer, and they look to us in this House to restore the credibility of the institution. That's why I think it is so important what you are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we are to speak to the Chair and that we are not to address our comments to the country as a whole, but I would encourage people, Mr. Speaker, if they are so moved, to call the Democratic leadership of this House and ask if the judge's simple request—the continuing chairmanship of the Ways and Means—might not be addressed by House leadership. Then perhaps we could have more than just a tabling of the motion. When the gentleman from Texas has gone to a great deal of difficulty to bring this privileged motion to the floor, then all we do is table a motion with no debate and with no actual discussion as to the merits of that motion.

I think the gentleman made a great point last week, and he made a great point again today when the motion was read on the floor. It is institutionally important that we establish credibility here on the floor of this House. We don't have it in the country, and we've got a number of big problems to get past, and it only makes that work that much harder.

So we have the chairman of the Ways and Means—the largest tax-writing body in the free world—who cannot do his own taxes because they're too complicated. I'll tell you what. There was a day back in Texas in the mid-'90s when my predecessor in my congressional seat introduced a bill called a flat tax, and I thought that was a great idea. Why do taxes have to be so hard? It turns out they're too hard for the chairman of the Ways and Means, and they're too hard for the Secretary of the Treasury. Well, yes. Then it's no great news that they're too hard for the rest of us as well.

I think we should do fundamental tax reform. I, frankly, don't understand why that has been so difficult to get through this House under both Republican and now Democratic leadership. We should do that. We should take on that fundamental work because the American people want us to do so.

Again, I commend the gentleman from Texas for bringing this issue to the floor of the House. I know it wasn't easy for him to do so, and he does attract a certain amount of attention that might be unwanted by doing this, but it was so important, and it is so important to the credibility of the institution. Therefore, it is so important to every one of us who serves in this body during this 111th session of Congress.

I think that the words of the President that are up on the poster just could not be clearer, which is that there is one standard for the powerful and one standard for the ordinary folks who are working every day and who are paying their taxes. That is wrong. It has to change. The place to change would be that of the chairman of the Ways and Means, and the time to change would be first thing tomorrow morning.

I yield back.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time we have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADLER of New Jersey). The gentleman from Texas has 11 minutes remaining.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you very much, and I thank my friend for coming in and for joining me in this hour as we discuss this matter.

In my lifetime, I have had to make a lot of tough decisions and have had to do a lot of tough things. I was telling one of my colleagues on the floor of the House today that I can remember the first time that I had to look a person in the eye and sentence him to death under Texas law. My heart was beating 100 beats a minute, and my blood pressure was probably through the roof. It

was a very difficult situation to face. It's just as difficult a situation for me when I respect the Members of this House to raise these issues, but I've spent all of my adult life in the business of trying to just bring fairness and truth to the forefront in whatever I've done, both as a judge and now as a Congressman.

I am no saint. Anybody who thinks I'm standing up here saying I've not made mistakes in my life doesn't know me or doesn't know Texas or doesn't know the life we live. We've all made mistakes in our lives, and mistakes can be honest mistakes, but this is an institution.

It pains me to think that little boys and little girls who might be in elementary school are hearing on television and at their breakfast tables comments from their parents: "Everybody in Washington is a crook. Everybody in Washington is lazy and gets special treatment. They're all a bunch of 'no goods.' We ought to throw every one of them out." They hear those things about Members of Congress, and maybe it applies to some, but it doesn't apply to the vast majority on both sides of the aisle. I can say that. So we're being painted with a brush, and that brush is full of paint because the media continually keeps it full of paint, and it's out there, painting us, until we're the black-hearted people of this world.

Yet, when I was a little boy many, many, many years ago, you know, we revered Members of Congress. When I went to school, all I heard was what a wonderful, great, democratic institution it was, the most revered institution on Earth—the United States Congress—and what wonderful, great men and women served. Do you know what? They were the same kind of men and women who serve today. They weren't any different. They weren't any more dedicated than the people who serve here today. They were the same kind of people.

I, that little boy in the first grade, was hearing Congress discussed at my mama and daddy's breakfast table. Even when my mother and father disagreed with something that Congress was doing, they still acknowledged them as special people—giving to the democracy that we hold dear, giving of their time and their talent and, quite frankly, giving of their lives, some of them, their very lives.

I know that, today, we celebrated 50 years of Chairman DINGELL's service to this House—the longest serving Member in the history of the Congress. So you can clearly say that JOHN DINGELL gave his entire adult life to this institution. That should be revered in the eyes of everybody, and that should not be tainted with somebody's saying, "dirty deeds are done by every Member of Congress; they're all evil and no good," because my colleagues and friends everywhere, that is not true, and that is why we have to raise issues on ourselves.

We are a body that has chosen as part of its governing unit a committee whose sole purpose is to judge ourselves. There are other institutions that do this. The bar associations in most cities of most States have bar committees that judge members of the bar, who are the lawyers. I may be mistaken, but I believe that the medical community judges itself and raises ethical issues on the medical community. I believe, in the accounting community, the accountants judge the ethics of the accounting community. So we're not unusual by setting up a group of our Members to judge our Members, but we have more of a standard to live with than that.

Our standard should be that we judge ourselves, that we try not to even appear to have committed some kind of impropriety. Avoid the appearance of impropriety. That is where we need to go. That is where we need to be. When things arise, we need to raise these issues, and we need to talk about them and talk about them not out of hate or out of politics. We need to talk about them out of love for the institution and say to ourselves, "What is my part of this, and what should I do?"

When I wrote the letter to Chairman RANGEL, I think that's kind of what I was saying. Mr. Chairman, this is the way ordinary folks get treated. You're not getting treated that way. Why don't you ask them to treat you that way? That's all I asked. I didn't say, "Resign." I didn't say, "Support the Rangel Rule." I said that. Then I said, "If you can't, then will you support my Rangel Rule?" That was the purpose. That was to remind him that we have an issue here, an issue of unfairness.

I think I'm going to be willing to give back some time tonight because I don't want to go off on another position that we can't complete, but we'll be back, and we'll be talking some more about ethics.

I would remind this body as a group that we all have a duty and a responsibility to try to live up to the standards that have been pronounced by the Speaker and now by the President of the United States that we be the most open, honest and ethical Congress in history and that we not have one standard for the powerful and another standard for the ordinary folks. Those are good goals to accomplish. I am going to step forward during this period of time in my life and try to get this body to accomplish those goals. If I can do that, I will go home and smile to my folks back home and say, "I did the best I could."

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, my name is KEITH ELLISON, and I am here once again to help represent the progressive message of the Progressive Caucus.

We are really, really pleased to be joined tonight by an absolutely stellar leader in our great country, none other than the chairwoman of the Progressive Caucus, the co-chairperson, LYNN WOOLSEY of California. Let me yield a little bit of time to the honorable chairwoman because, when she is on the floor, representing our great caucus in this great body in this great country, it is always fun to listen to what she shares with us. Actually, she is going to share a little bit about a letter that the Progressive Caucus wrote, among other things. I am just going to yield the floor to Congresswoman LYNN WOOLSEY for a moment so she can get us started off right.

Congresswoman LYNN WOOLSEY, how are you today?

Ms. WOOLSEY. I'm fine, KEITH. Thank you again for pulling together a Progressive Caucus Special Order and for making it something that we want to come down here and talk from our perspectives about as to what's going on in our Congress and in our country and overall in our world.

Right now, this country of ours, this Congress of ours and certainly every single person I saw in my district—Marin and Sonoma Counties—over the weekend are all talking about one thing, and that is the stimulus package, the recovery package, that we are debating between the House and the Senate. Now, after 1 week and 1 day of electing a new President, the House passed the President's recovery package, and we are proud of it. The Senate has changed it slightly—considerably. Really and truly, 90 percent is overlap in one way or another, but there are some misses that our leadership will have to deal with in conference.

I don't know how many people understand what happens when the House passes a piece of legislation on an issue and then when the Senate passes a different piece of legislation on the same issue. In order to have a law, we have to have conferencing between the House and the Senate. It's bipartisan with Republicans and Democrats. The conferees go into a room, and they start working out the differences. The only thing they talk about is where the two pieces of legislation differ and where they can come together and agree.

So now, what does this have to do with the Progressive Caucus?

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Well, your Chairs of the Progressive Caucus, myself and RAÚL GRIJALVA, wrote a letter to the conferees asking for four important issues to be strengthened in conference between the House and the Senate.

And maybe what you would like to do, KEITH—I will talk about the first section and then hand it over to you to comment on, and then we'll go to the