



# MONETARY & ECONOMIC REVIEW

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## The “Culture of Corruption”

By MER Editors

Remember the “swamp” Nancy Pelosi promised to drain when her party captured the House in 2006? At the time, the GOP had been plagued by scandal, and the Democrats made the most of it. Their gains in Congress were due in large part to their promises to clean up what they (and the liberal media) had built up as a “culture of corruption” in the Bush administration and among Republicans in Congress.

For a while, it seemed every other phrase out of Madame Pelosi’s mouth was “culture of corruption.” Other Democrat leaders picked up the phrase and on it went, popping up in endless sound bytes and countless appearances before the news cameras. It would be hard to miss the hypocrisy, seeing that the Democrats have always had more than their own share of corruption. (The difference is, Democrats close ranks around their corrupted members and make no apologies. The Republicans always shoot their wounded.)

Now, the shoe seems to be on the other foot. Heretofore self-righteous Democrats are having to deal with a veritable rat’s nest of corruption in their own party. Just as Nancy Pelosi campaigned on “cleaner government,” so did Barack Obama. It was part of the glittering “hop and change” bauble that he dangled before enthralled crowds on the campaign trail. How inconvenient now – for Obama and for the Democrat Party – that Illinois Governor Blagojevich’s ploy to “sell” Obama’s Senate seat should surface at this time.

That scandal – which promises to play for a good while in the media – has intensified the focus on other ethical problems among Democrats, the ongoing ethical problems concerning House Ways and Means Chairman, Charlie Rangel, for starters. The House Ethics Committee has received a truckload of complaints about Rangel’s real estate “irregularities,” his tax problems, his questionable trips to the Caribbean, and ethics questions pertaining to donations to the Charles B. Rangel Center for Public Service at City College of New York. Ms. Pelosi must be having a hard time sweeping this much corruption under the rug! (It is our understanding that the House Ethics Committee has been virtually shut down of late.)

There is also the story in the *Chicago Tribune* concerning Illinois Representative Luis Gutierrez, who pocketed the tidy sum of \$420,000 through a series of suspicious real estate deals.

And how about Texas Rep. Silvestre Reyes, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, who has been under scrutiny in recent months for questionable earmarking? Another earmarking freeloader, Virginia Rep. Alan Mollohan, is also under investigation.

And let’s not forget Senator Chris Dodd. The Connecticut senator has yet to answer questions about the sweetheart mortgage deal he got from Countrywide – while serving as Chairman of the very committee whose duty it is to oversee the practices of financial institutions such as Countrywide!

As Congress opened their first session of 2009, new broke that Obama’s choice for Commerce Secretary, Bill Richardson, is under investigation for possible “pay to play” deals in 2003 and 2004. Richardson has withdrawn his nomination.

A good many scoundrels rode back into their seats aboard Barack Obama’s coattails. It looked for a time like Pennsylvania’s Paul Kanjorski and John Murtha might be unseated because of their earmarking practices; but the huge amount of money the Obama campaign dumped into Pennsylvania was a big factor in getting them re-elected.

Rep. William Jefferson of “Hurricane Katrina/Cash in the Freezer” fame did lose his seat in Louisiana, and there is some consolation in seeing even one crook run out of office.

House Minority Leader John Boehner gets it. The American taxpayers are fed up with over-paid, perpetually-tenured members of Congress – of either party – who spend most of their time devising ways to stay in office and get rich at taxpayers’ expense. But Pelosi and Reid may have overplayed their hands with the relentless “culture of corruption” attacks on the Republicans. The shoe is on the other foot now, and Boehner intends to turn Democratic infractions into a big political story.

At this point, the Republicans have made some headway in getting their own house in order. Most of its worst offenders, such as Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens, have received their just desserts at the hands of prosecutors and the voters. Boehner has moved to strip Alaska Rep. Don Young, currently under federal investigation, of his seat on the resources committee.

Had Speaker Pelosi been as zealous to clean up her own House as she was to condemn the Republicans, she would have kept her mouth shut and thus avoided being exposed for the hypocrite that she is. She is in a terrible bind now: She can't remove Rangel from Ways and Means without angering the Congressional Black Caucus. They're already mad because she worked for Jefferson's ouster from that same Committee. And besides, Rep. Pete Stark is next in line for Rangel's slot and he is a maverick liberal that Pelosi would have trouble containing.

And what about President-elect Obama? Is he really as clean as he wants us to believe? Will Chicago politics follow him to the White House? One of his slickest achievements – many thanks to the controlled and complicit liberal media – was to convince a lot of voters that his rise in Chicago politics was unconnected to Chicago politics. Get that?

Besides that, are we to believe that being surrounded by leftists, former terrorists, America haters, and corrupt Chicago politicians for virtually all of his adult life has made Barack Obama a better man?

One political commentator has wryly observed that, while Jesus merely walked on water, Obama accomplished the miraculous feat of walking on the cesspool of Chicago politics without being tainted. Yeah, he certainly is an amazing guy!