

# Rep. Charles Rangel Reflects on Stellar Political Career

Longtime member of New York's congressional delegation will retire at end of this Congressional year

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Charles B. Rangel, the celebrated dean of New York's congressional delegation currently serving as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, has always been one who stepped to the front of the line on behalf of his fellow Americans.

Now, the 86-year-old attorney, a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, the first Black chair of the highly-influential House Ways and Means Committee, the recipient of both a Purple Heart and Bronze Star for service in the U.S. Army, and the former New York State Assembly member who successfully defeated long-time incumbent Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. in his 1971 quest for election to the House, will retire from office at the end of the congressional year.

But, have no fear – the Harlem-born stalwart for “the least of these” says he plans to continue to serve his community, his Democratic Party and his fellow Americans.

However, his primary focus will be enjoying life with his wife, Alma, and spending more time with their children and grandchildren.

“After 46 years in political office, it’s going to be strange when the new Congress takes over in January and I’m not among the members,” Rangel said.

“The emotional impact hasn’t hit me yet. I’m just grateful for enjoying a career that has given me the opportunity to improve the lives of working people, defend veterans, contribute to President Obama’s historic health care legislation, and rehabilitate our nation’s public schools,” he said.

Looking at the upcoming presidential election, Rangel said he hopes his fellow Democrats will follow the example of former President Frank-

lin Delano Roosevelt and make a significant investment in education and America’s infrastructure while tackling ongoing social problems and issues related to world

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As for family matters and his retirement plans, the wily New Yorker said he and his wife are excited about the future.

“We have a very long list of things we want to do, and we’ll need to cut it down. It will definitely include traveling, speaking engagements from time to time, and raising funds for City College,” said Rangel. He earned high praise for his leadership in persuading U.S. investors to pull out of apartheid-based South Africa in 1986, and for his founding of an international affairs program in the State Department in cooperation with Howard University. As of 2015, the program has trained over 200 “Rangel Fellows” for positions as Foreign Service officers in U.S. embassies around the world.

And, while he admits that saying “goodbye” won’t be easy, he welcomes the change.

“Just talking about retirement has helped me

remove the political cataracts from my eyes,” he said. “I now see my wife and family in a much clearer light. Fortunately, my wife and I are both in good health, and so

we’ll be able to enjoy this new phase in our lives.”

“A career in politics tends to blind you from so much because you have to be so committed, maintain so much ener-

gy, and are constantly working to succeed on behalf of your constituents. It takes a lot out of you. Soon that will be behind me.”

Rangel continued: “I can’t wait to simply wake up every day and spend more time with my wife.”



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