

## Ethics, shmethics

### Rangel-probe boss has own \$\$ woe

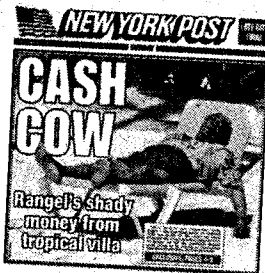
By ISABEL VINCENT

After an eight-month delay, the House Ethics Committee investigating Rep. Charles Rangel's alleged misdeeds finally has a new chief — a lawyer with financial baggage of his own, The Post has learned.

The 10-member Committee on Standards of Official Conduct last week hired one of its own, Richard Blake Chisam, 40, for the \$155,000-a-year post.

Not only is Chisam an aide to committee chairwoman, Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), he was also on the search panel that chose him.

According to his latest disclosure statements, Chisam owes up to \$300,000 in student loans



**FLASHBACK:** Charlie's Caribbean rental trouble.

and filed for bankruptcy in 2000 in Pennsylvania and in 2001 in Georgia.

He explained that in 2000 a difficult pregnancy resulted in steep medical bills and the loss of his wife's income and that he got a new job the next year in Georgia and was advised by his attorney to file Chapter 7 to keep creditors away.

Federal filings show that wife Jasmine Majid, who used to be his law partner, gave \$950 to Democratic campaigns over the last two years.

Ken Boehm, of the watchdog National Legal and Policy Center, was quick to rip the eyebrow-raising pick.

"No wonder the House Ethics Committee is considered something of a joke," Boehm said. "Despite having to investigate ... a powerful congressman like Charlie Rangel, [it] goes many months without a staff director and then picks a partisan staffer of its chairwoman."

But Rep. Jo Bonner (R-Ala.), who was on the four-member panel that screened 150 applicants,

defended the choice.

"Blake did not apply for or otherwise seek this responsibility," Bonner said. "Rather, for the past few months, I have been impressed with his performance and his ability to work in a nonpartisan fashion."

Rangel, 78, who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, allegedly failed to declare rental income on beachfront property he owns in the Dominican Republic.

Also being looked at is his storage of a vintage Mercedes in a House parking garage and a \$1 million pledge to the Rangel Center from an oil firm that benefited from Rangel-sponsored tax legislation.

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