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Employee Depreciation Day

By Tim Dietz – SSA VP, Communications & Government Relations

I've identified the worst place to be an employee. I've worked in and around Washington, D.C. for nearly two decades and nowhere have I seen employees "rolled under the bus" more than in the political world. When you fill out your application for a political position, you might as well check the box marked: "I don't expect loyalty from my employer."

This subject came to my mind not because of some motivational ho-hum, but because I lobby for a living and I see how so many of these self-loving politicians play the game. Last month, word leaked that Congress's chief tax author, Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), had taken trips to the Caribbean fully funded by corporations. Rangel pointed to a report which said he didn't know who paid, *but his staff did*.

"Common sense dictates that members of Congress should not be held responsible for what could be the wrongdoing or errors of staff, unless there's reason to believe that the member knew or should have known," Rangel said, apparently with a straight face.

Herein lies the gap in logic. The common sense of a ferret would tell anyone in Rangel's position (that would be someone who knows he didn't pay for the \$15 Margarita in

his hand, or for the flight to reach said Margarita) that the money would have to come from either the U.S. taxpayers or from a party interested in making you happy. Either would be a gross breach of ethics. What Rangel apparently doesn't believe, is that "rolling your employees under the bus" is also unethical. I disagree—and if I worked for Charles Rangel (and I would sooner work in a tank of scorpions) I'd have walked out the minute that quote hit the wires.

This seems to be a bipartisan personality trait, because plenty of Republicans are ridiculously guilty, too. Take, for instance, Mark Sanford, the South Carolina governor who left his office, for days, and didn't tell anyone. Upon his return he admitted to running off to Argentina to see his girlfriend. The man is the chief executive of an entire state and went to South America without telling his staff (not to mention his wife)! I think the Statue of Liberty would have a better chance of disappearing without it being noticed. Sanford's staff lied for him while they were ignorant themselves—and all will likely lose their jobs.

It should go without saying that you can't expect your employees to be loyal to you if you aren't loyal to them. But perhaps politicians aren't the best example. ❖