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U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., made his reputation in Chicago politics as the guy who wouldn't go along to get along. As a Cook County Board member, he got in the face of regular Democrats. He spent a decade in that office championing reform, battling the corruption and cronyism that plagues Cook County government. He often embarrassed -- and enraged -- his fellow Democrats.

Now Quigley's in Washington and it's good to see that he hasn't changed.

Last week, Quigley was the first to break ranks with his fellow Democrats over the metastasizing Countrywide Financial loan scandal. That's the House probe into whether top Democrats and Republicans got special mortgage deals from big lenders, including former Countrywide Financial CEO Angelo Mozilo, in what was known as the "Friends of Angelo" program.

Quigley set off quite a kerfuffle within his party by urging Rep. Edolphus Towns, D-N.Y., chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, to issue a subpoena to Countrywide as part of an investigation into whether preferential loans were given to policymakers and other influential government officials.

How bad did Dems *not* want to investigate themselves and Angelo's friends? The Wall Street Journal reported that one plan under consideration would have authorized a subpoena of records covering all federal officials, *except* members of Congress.

Hmmm. Could that be because Chairman Towns himself apparently received a mortgage from Countrywide, although he denies any wrongdoing?

Late last week, Towns caved. He announced the committee would issue the subpoena to Countrywide's corporate parent, Bank of America.

Quigley is a freshman congressman, a newbie, a junior member in a body that doesn't listen to junior members. By demanding this subpoena, he risks embarrassing some of his party's big guns. And who'll be surprised if the names of Republican swells also show up in these records?

Democratic leaders who won control of Congress in large part because of GOP corruption in Washington might want to pay heed to what Quigley is saying -- because it happens to be true: "Both parties must decide that they can't protect their members, no matter how powerful they

are."

Remember, Democrats promised to end the era of ethics scandals. But now House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic leaders are protecting Rep. Charles Rangel of New York, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. The House ethics committee has been looking into many alleged ethics violations by Rangel for nearly a year.

Result: Nothing.

Democrats also are shielding the powerful Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., and what looks like an earmarks scandal-in-the-making. Last spring, Quigley had barely been sworn in when he bucked Democratic leaders and backed a *Republican* call for a House ethics probe into a high-flying Washington lobbying firm whose clients got millions of dollars in Murtha earmarks. "This is who I am," Quigley said during that episode. "You can't change your DNA when you get here."

He further perturbed the leadership by introducing a bill that would stop politicians from shoveling earmark money to private, for-profit companies. That bill didn't go far enough for us. But it's fair to say that it went *way* too far for Democratic leaders, who sidelined it.

They probably wish Quigley would just keep quiet and toe the line. But he's likelier to continue riling some folks in Washington.

Keep it up, Congressman.

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