

Hypocrisy Alert: Republicans Agreed with Ocasio-Cortez Until About One Minute Ago

When congresswoman-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) confessed her personal financial dilemma — “I have three months without a salary before I’m a member of Congress. So, how do I get an apartment? Those little things are very real” — to the *New York Times*, guffaws broke out on the right.

“Some of those shoots she had during her campaign, she had these multi-thousand dollar outfits that could pay a month’s rent in Washington,” said Fox News correspondent Ed Henry.

“[T]hat jacket and coat don’t look like a girl who struggles,” wrote the *Washington Examiner*’s Eddie Scarry in a tweet he deleted after an uproar.

I get it. It’s easy to mock a self-proclaimed “democratic socialist” who wants to remake the US economy when she hasn’t proven her own financial acumen by piling up a nice nest egg before running for Congress.

But return with me now to those thrilling days of yesteryear ...

Former House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-TX), who served in Congress from 1985-2003, slept in his office rather than rent an apartment in DC. So did outgoing Speaker Paul Ryan. In fact, that trend caught on among Republican members of Congress to such an extent that earlier this year it resulted in an ethics complaint from members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

A half-religious, half-political organization called The Fellowship runs the C Street Center, where (mostly Republican) congresspersons pay discounted rent for rooms — with maid service. Why? “A lot of men don’t have an extra \$1,500 to rent an apartment,” The Fellowship’s Reverend Louis P. Sheldon told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2002.

Some congressional Republicans describe the “live in my office” routine as political theater, demonstrating their principled devotion to “fiscal responsibility.” Others frankly admit that even on a salary of \$174,000 a year it’s not easy to maintain two households (one in their districts, one in very, very expensive DC).

And, let’s be clear here: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is an outlier. She was a waitress before running for, and unexpectedly winning, election to a body in which the average member’s net worth is more than \$1 million. If anyone has a valid complaint about the increased living costs involved with serving in Congress, it’s her.

This is a chance for her to show off her “democratic socialist” credentials. She favors income equality and presumably opposes rent as exploitative, right?

Ocasio-Cortez should introduce a bill to provide housing for members of Congress — in squad bays at Marine Corps Barracks Washington DC, a mere 25-minute walk from the Capitol — while simultaneously reducing pre-tax congressional pay to the average American’s post-tax income.

I wonder how many “fiscally responsible” Republican members of Congress would support such frugality and equality. And, given their own similar preening, why some wouldn’t.