

The Honorable Helen Delich Bentley
U.S. Representative of Maryland (1985–1995)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Battling Discrimination

Representative Bentley recalls her conversation with Congresswoman Margaret Heckler of Massachusetts about why she refused a high-ranking position on the Federal Maritime Commission.
Interview recorded March 21, 2016

Peggy Heckler was there, became their spokesteam. Peggy called me up and said, “Why?—We want you to take that seat.” I said, “Congresswoman, I’m not taking that seat because the chairmanship is open. They’re giving it to a man from Warren, Ohio. He’s a lawyer who’s never been on a ship who knows nothing about a ship, or cargo, or trade. And I’m not going to make him look good. I’m not taking it.” She called me up again and I said, “Well, let’s see, the Civil Aeronautics Board is open—chair—I’ll take that.” She passed that on to Peter Flanigan, and Peter went, “A woman can’t handle that job. Women can’t do nothing.” So, I said to Peggy when she called me, I said, “Peggy, now you know the discrimination that’s going on.” I said, “I’ve been writing about the CAB and all of the transportation now for several years, and I know as much about them, more so than Peter Flanigan.”