

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Running for Congress

Representative Bentley describes her early campaigns for Congress against Representative Clarence Long of Maryland.

Interview recorded March 21, 2016

I went back home and I began looking at the port again. And I said, “The Port of Baltimore needs a 50-foot channel or it’s going to die up here in the upper part of the bay.” So, that became my challenge for a campaign and also that the sitting Congressman Clarence Long then was not only elderly, but he showed it. And I decided to take him on. Now the Republicans were not well-organized at that time in the Second District, but I was pleased with the support that came to help me. Clarence Long was the sitting Congressman, and he had played mockery in that district for 10 or 11 years, 10 or 11 terms. Well, I ran the first time, and I was not pleased with the outcome, of course. I lost, and I—and that was in ’80. In ’82, I ran again. And this was after redistricting had taken place and I had a better potential as a Republican. So, I had all of my, I’d say, quarters in line and we ran. I lost by two percentage points. And I decided, “I’m going once more.” And this time I pushed the issue of the 50-foot channel and the need for it. And I really acquired a, a much larger volunteer support and more money.