

The Honorable Barbara Boxer

U.S. Representative of California (1983–1993) and U.S. Senator of California (1993–2017)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Accessing the House Gym: Part One

The Honorable Barbara Boxer explains how she and other women Members attempted to exercise without access to the House Gym reserved for Congressmen.

Interview recorded November 29, 2018

When I got there, you know, from California—California was very exercise-minded, and I was used to working out, taking long walks, and you know, working out in a gym. So I tried to go to the gym, and they said, “There’s no, you can’t go to the main gym, but there’s a women’s gym.” So I said, “Oh, good, there’s a women’s gym. Where is it?” “Well, we’ll show it to you.” So, as I explained in the book, I go there, it’s like, you know, 10-foot by 8-foot space and mostly with hairdryers. And I couldn’t believe it, but I thought, “Okay, this is what we’ve got.” So a friend of mine came and we did aerobic exercises. My friend Claudette came out there; she’s like a guru, you know exercise guru. So we all line up, and, and we, we hardly have any room. Olympia Snowe comes, Gerry Ferraro comes, everybody comes in their best clothes except for me and Barbara—we were in sweats—and Barbara, and, and Claudette says, “Okay everybody, put your hands on your hips.” And, and, oh no, “put your hands on your waist,” and with that, Mikulski yells out, “If I had a waist I wouldn’t be here.” And of course everyone gets hysterical, and we realize we could never do this. It was this tiny little room. So I was bound and determined to get a gym, and I tried everything. I went to everybody. They all said, “No, no, no.”