

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

“Women Making History”

The Honorable Barbara Boxer recalls the changing role of women in political campaigns.

Interview recorded November 29, 2018

Women never gave money in those days to politicians. They did not—ever. I mean, maybe one out of a million women gave, but in the general election, one of my friends said, you know, “We’re going to make history here. Let’s do a women’s luncheon.” And I said, “Nobody’s going to come.” And they said, “Well, let’s price it low.” And I said, “Okay.” And then my friend Duane Garrett, who is no longer with us—that’s sad to say—said, “Wait a minute. Let’s price it at \$100.” And we all went, “Oh my God, no one’s going to give \$100.” Well, to our surprise women flocked to the event, and it became—it was, up until that time in history, the largest women’s event, most successful, in the country, period. And it was so exciting, that moment, and we called it “Women Making History.” And we honored women who were doing unusual things, like they were, you know, in those years, doctors—I’m not kidding—things that you take for granted today. You know, women who owned their own businesses, and women who were policemen and firemen, and we honored those—and it started a tradition that I had every single year. Every single year that I was in public office I did “Women Making History.” And we honored, you know, we’ve honored Hillary, we’ve honored women, you know, who were, who were really striving to make inroads in life, and so, yes, that was the first time that women really came out in, I think in the country, and certainly in California, for women. Because the prejudice was that women didn’t want other women. That was, that was the conventional wisdom, quote unquote, that women didn’t want women. Now that’s not true today, not that every woman gets all the women’s votes, but I think it’s just there are many, many women who prefer to vote for a woman today.