

The Honorable Beverly Barton Butcher Byron
U.S. Representative of Maryland (1979–1993)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Dressing for Congress

Representative Byron discusses the wardrobe expectations for Members of Congress.
Interview recorded June 15, 2016

I can tell a, a story on a colleague of mine who was running for the other body. And three of us got her in the back and told her that she couldn't possibly run in a polyester pantsuit. She had to upgrade. And she said, "Well, what do you mean?" And I said, "Well, you've got to go get some shoes. You can't run in Docksidors. I mean, you're going to the United States Senate." So, she comes back and puts her foot up and says, "Look at this shoe." And I said, "Yes?" She says, "It's Ferragamo." I said, "I know." She said, "Do you know what it costs?" I said, "Mm-hmm." "My mother could have bought a suit, a hat, pocketbook, and coat for what I paid for these shoes." I said, "Mm-hmm. But your mother wasn't running for United States Senate." So yes, there's a dress code, but there's also, it's also changed. It's like I said earlier. My mother-in-law, when she ran for Congress the first time, she campaigned in, in a black veil and black because she was the new widow, mother of five children. So, it, it's changed.