

**The Honorable Lois Capps**  
U.S. Representative of California (1998–2017)

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**Energy and Commerce Committee: Part One**

Representative Capps recalls learning about the Energy and Commerce Committee.  
*Interview recorded July 16, 2019*

My two important issues always were, from the beginning, healthcare, because of my profession, and in protecting the environment, stewardship of the environment, which came naturally to me, having lived here a very long time as well, and seeing some natural disasters, like our big oil spill, and wanting to be focused on renewable energy. So I got, I was fortunate. And that's a campaign all unto itself, about how you get to exercise your areas of expertise that fits your district. I wanted to be on the Energy and Commerce Committee from the day that I was very new—this is a little aside now, so you're going to have to bring me back to the point, to the question—but one, one, one of my first days in Congress after the special, I found myself sitting on the House Floor, and I heard my colleague from Denver, Diana DeGette, give a speech, give a five-minute speech on the Patient's Bill of Rights. And I was sort of dumbfounded. I couldn't believe they were talking about a topic that would be so dear to my heart as a nurse, hearing about healthcare, and people's need to, to have access to healthcare, and those kind of things, which were my passion. So when she finished her speech, I—her talk and came and sat on the floor, I went and sat next to her, introduced myself, and I said, "How do you get to give a speech like that?" And she looked at me and she said, "You've got to get yourself on the Energy and Commerce Committee, because that's where the Health Subcommittee resides, as well as the Energy Subcommittee." But I, at that point I was focused on the health.