

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“You Have to Make Stuff Happen”

Representative Capps offers advice to young women interested in politics.
Interview recorded July 16, 2019

If they're young enough, and many are girls, which is wonderful—I say, get involved. If you're in high school, get involved on, on, in clubs, in activities that bring you with other people, and let you form coalitions. Or you run for a school office, or a class president, or whatever it is. And you form alliances and you figure out what your skills and your strengths are, and keep doing that within the political system, if you feel a, a calling to do that, or an urge to do it. And, and it'll, it'll roll out in front of you. You have to make stuff happen, and you have to find out you've got to have enough drive to be able to do that. You can't—I was raised to kind of sit back and wait for people to ask, you know, wait until you're spoken to—that's not far removed from my generation. So people—but women are always still accused more of being pushy. A man is called “assertive,” and a woman is called, you know, “pushy” and, for the same activities. So there's a way to, to do it, where you can not be off-putting, if possible. But believe me, as you've found out from talking with other women as well, being Mrs. Nice Guy, or Nice Gal, isn't necessarily going to be something you can hold on to forever.