

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Walter Capps' Background: Part One

Representative Capps recalls her husband's concern about Vietnam War veterans.
Interview recorded July 16, 2019

I have to keep going back to his story, because that's how I got into it. I was working as a school nurse, he was teaching at the university. But he got started teaching, it was right during the Vietnam War era. And he, he—it sort of ripped apart our campus, as it did many campuses around the country, with drafts, with people protesting the war, and kind of pros and cons that, that were very inflammatory. Santa Barbara campus was particularly so. A lot of the protests ended up in the Bank of America branch of the, the community of Isla Vista that's right next to the campus being burned. So, I mean, it was the riots in L.A., it was a lot. It was the tumultuous '60s. And he, my husband, for another reason, got to know some Vietnam veterans who were coming back, and they were spit upon when they got out of the airplanes at the airport leaving their service. They didn't ask to go to war, and they fought a war that was very unpopular. And when they came back, at least in California, they had to go into hiding. They couldn't acknowledge, even some of them to their family, that they had had these experiences. And he met a few vets full of anger and, at this Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. And he, he was so taken, first by their youth, and also by their experiences.