

The Honorable Eva M. Clayton
U.S. Representative of North Carolina (1992–2003)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Freshman Class President

Representative Clayton describes how being freshman class president helped her accomplish things in Congress.

Interview recorded May 15, 2015

Well, it surely had no authority actually, but it was, for me, a greater sense of visibility and access. I was used a little bit as a liaison between my class, the leadership, as well as the President. And they also probably used me to assemble the leadership of my class to vote the party's ticket or the bills that they were pushing. Because to have about 40-some Members in that class meant you had a significant number of that. So the benefit was access, the benefit was visibility. I used that in my push for the black farmers. Knowing that I could have access, I made the opportunity available for black farmers to meet with the President. I had presented the case to my Agriculture Committee, they had dismissed it. They did hear it, in fairness to the Agriculture Committee. They heard it, they said nothing we could do because the statute of limitation is expired, and you've lost the opportunity to raise the issue. And it was a legitimate issue for the black farmers, and it actually was a limitation legally, but it didn't mean that we shouldn't find a way. So the opportunity to have the President hear this case, certainly I used that. I used also access to then Speaker Foley when we had a terrible storm down and destroyed a bit of Princeville. The action to come, to get resources, and he, he did, and it, it made a big, big difference to that. I wouldn't have had that, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to raise those issues in that way if I, I hadn't had the position. So, yes, I used it.