

Rochelle Dornatt
Chief of Staff, Representative Sam Farr of California

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Office Politics

Rochelle Dornatt recalls pay inequities in the workplace.
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The office was very warm, and very inviting. The staff was easy to get along with. But along the way, there are, there are subtle signs that come out. Our chief of staff was a really nice guy. He was very political. But the one thing that I, I questioned—and it—I never said anything, because it really—at that point it was, you know, this is the way politics work, and there's, there's "big-P" politics out there, you know, in terms of presidential campaigns, and then there's office politics, "little-P" politics. So you always have to be aware of what's going on wherever. But it plays into some of today's issues, and that is I learned that the men on staff were making more than the women. And I—at some point I must have said something like that to him, but not in an accusatory manner, but his reply was, "Well, men are the breadwinners." And I'm like, "Well, not in my house. It's just me, and I'm the breadwinner." But, but that was the attitude. And, and you saw that back then, you know, in the private sector, where women, at that time, were making 56 cents on the dollar that men were making, so to him it made sense, but to me it didn't. I was, I was doing as much as the guy who sat next to me, but, okay, I needed the job, and I, and I liked the job. I mean, I wasn't complaining so much as I was like, "Wow." You know, it's—reality hits you upside the head, and, and it makes you think. Does it—is this the way it's supposed to be?