

The Honorable Donna F. Edwards
U.S. Representative of Maryland (2008–2017)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Escorting the President in the House Chamber

Representative Edwards provides a behind-the-scenes look at how Members escort the President to the House Chamber for Joint Sessions of Congress.

Interview recorded June 29, 2018

After I came onto the leadership team as a co-chair of Steering and Policy I became one of the Members who was allowed to escort the President of the United States into the, into the chamber. And I remember the first time I was notified by the, by the Leader's office, and I didn't even know what it, what it meant. I just knew it happened because I'd obviously been in the chamber before when that happened, but I didn't know what went on behind the scenes. And so your name is called after the appointment is made from the presiding officer. Your name is called, and then, you know, all the names that are called are funneled back around to the back of the, of the chamber and into the ceremonial office where the President of the United States is in the office, usually standing behind a couple of flags. And each one of us who are Members go and we shake his hand, a photograph is taken, and then we assemble in line. And there is no order. The House and Senate Members—you know, I guess maybe it should be by seniority, but sometimes it's just jockeying for position. And you assemble and then you file two by two into the House Chamber. The doors, of course, open up and your colleagues are lined up on the chamber because they're waiting to greet the President and they all shake your hands too as you're coming in. And so, you know, shake hands, you greet your colleagues, say, "Oh, it's great to see you." And, and then finally after that, the President of the United States comes through those doors.