

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Race, Gender, and Politics

Representative Edwards reflects on the role of race and gender in Maryland politics.
Interview recorded June 29, 2018

It's hard for me to separate them, to be quite honest with you. It's really difficult to separate because when things happen or when you have to face some challenges you don't know whether it really it's about race, or it's about gender. I think certainly when I was first elected there was just a perception that people who are in Congress are men, they're not women. And even in our delegation, you know, Connie Morella I think was the last woman to have served before I was elected, and so there was a, a wide gap. I can't remember, maybe it was about six years. I remember when I first moved to Maryland when I was a coming out of high school going to college and my first election we had four men and four women in our House delegation, which was highly unusual. By the time I left there was one woman in the House delegation and that was me. And, it's amazing to me that over the, that period of about, what, 35 years that we went from an even number of women in our House delegation to none. And now today in our entire delegation, House and Senate, there's not a single woman in the Maryland delegation. And I, I, I want to think seriously about why that has happened and that the barriers are still there for women to run and win in these congressional seats.