

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Surprise Decision

Representative Edwards shares how she surprised herself and others when she decided to run for Congress.

Interview recorded June 29, 2018

No, I wasn't recruited at all. In fact, I was so frustrated with the Member of Congress who was representing us at the time that I went around trying to recruit other people to run and nobody would run against him because they thought that he was unbeatable and it was a huge machine. And so I remember very clearly, it was actually Good Friday, and I was standing in front of my mirror and I was just kind of getting dressed for the day and I didn't have, you know, a huge day in front of me and I looked at myself and I said, "Why don't you just run?" And so I drove to Annapolis that day. I think they were going to close at noon, they were going to close early, and I drove to Annapolis and I filled out a couple of pieces of paper. I think I had to write a \$100 check, and then I became a candidate. But the funny thing is I didn't tell anybody about it right away. I went through the weekend, Easter Sunday, with my family and finally on Monday I said, you know, I have to tell people because people will actually know and so I started telling first my family. They were totally taken off guard and surprised and they had no idea what that meant or what kind of commitment it would mean for them. And then I began to communicate with community leaders all across the congressional district that I knew to help me out. It was a very scrappy grassroots campaign.