

The Honorable Melissa A. Hart
U.S. Representative of Pennsylvania (2001–2007)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

On the Judiciary Committee after September 11, 2001

Representative Hart explains how her work on the Judiciary Committee dramatically changed after the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Interview recorded September 30, 2019

My first nine months of being a Congressman were normal. We had—when I say normal, I mean we had the priorities that we had—problems that we needed to solve within the country. You know, I wasn't on the Intelligence Committee or Foreign Affairs, so I was working on issues that were domestic. Well, you know, one, one day later, you know, crash course on what's going on in the Middle East, having intelligence briefings like every other day. You know, we had Blackberrys then, right. So leave your Blackberry with the committee staff and then you are allowed in the room. These were very much classified. They were all, constantly changing information as far as updates and that sort of thing. So we were in these meetings all the time for quite a while after 9/11. And so it was all during PATRIOT Act—working on the things that we needed to change. Significant piece of legislation. And again, part of that experience was everybody dropping their partisan issues and saying, “Wow, we just had the most horrible thing in our lifetime really happen to us and we need to protect this country and we need to do our duty here.” And everybody did their duty.