

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

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**“Don’t Vote for Me Because I’m a Woman”**

Representative Hart talks about the importance of women relying on professional qualifications when running for public office.

*Interview recorded September 30, 2019*

Well, I think more of them need to run, I think still. I think more women who are interested in public policy, who develop an expertise, who have a lot of substance on an argument for, you know, we need to do this, we need to do that—need to be involved in the process. I don’t, I don’t believe in running just because you’re a woman. I think you should run because you’re a good candidate. And so there are more and more women who are developing into good candidates so I think you’ll see the number go up. I see it around my area—there’s a, a young woman who serves now in the state house who again came up through working on different races. She got into a profession, you know, just has—there’s a lot of there there, just like your standard male candidate. That’s what we need. I don’t think there needs to be a different path for a woman who runs for office than there is for a guy who runs for office. And the problem that we’ve had is that I think you do have women who run just because they’re women sometimes. There’s, there’s more to it than that and I don’t think there’s anything wrong with some people running when they’re younger or when they’re older. I just think that there ought to be just more behind it. Don’t vote for me because I’m a woman. I think if, if anybody ever utters that, they should not run for office. That there has to be more there. And it, and when other women say, “Vote for her because she’s a woman” I’d be like, “No, no, wait, stop. That’s part of it, but, but what is she going to do that is important that she serve?” And if we don’t have that as women, we won’t have more Members.