

## **Betsy Wright Hawkings**

Chief of Staff, Representative Christopher Shays of Connecticut

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

#### **Women and Positions of Influence in the House**

Betsy Wright Hawkings reflects on how many women—Members and staff—have gained positions of power in Congress since the beginning of her career.

*Interview recorded April 18, 2016*

Well, I think, I think there are still some notable exceptions to this, but I think they are more—I think there's still a men's network on both sides of the aisle. What there also now is, is a women's network, because there's enough women to have a network. And I think that there's less of a sense of women Members, of men Members—there's less of a sense of separateness, particularly among the younger Members. You see a lot of times, you'll see them travel in a pack. They're just friends. And, and I also think that what I see particularly in some of the more recent couple of classes, which have had more women in them on both sides of the aisle, is they travel in a bipartisan pack sometimes, too. Not always, but more than I would have seen them do 10 years ago. I think that there's more concerted effort to make sure that women who are in line for chairmanships are given their due. When we took the majority in '95 we had one, you know, woman chair and that was of the Small Business Committee. I don't know how many subcommittee chairs there were, but it wasn't many, in part because there weren't that many women who were in a position of seniority to take those positions. That certainly has changed. Again, on both sides of the aisle, ranking, you know, and—so, you know, over time that has an effect. I don't know that you could point to one point where there was a tipping point, but over time that has an effect and then for new staff who come in, you know, they didn't experience it any other way.