

The Honorable Elizabeth Holtzman
U.S. Representative of New York (1973–1981)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Learning about the Press

Representative Holtzman describes learning to work with the media when she arrived in Congress.
Interview recorded March 10, 2016

You know, I didn't really understand the press when I got here because we didn't have any media budget. So, I was not an expert in the press. I really didn't understand it. I read newspapers, I watched TV and the news on TV, but I didn't really understand it. It took my being on the Judiciary Committee during Watergate, and then I had to deal with the press all the time. And I got to know the reporters and the TV people, and all that stuff. And I got to see the impact because the hearings were televised. And they were only televised because the new Members and particularly a freshman Member from Utah, Wayne Owens, said we need to, we need to televise these hearings. But the chair was completely opposed to it. And the older members of the committee were completely opposed to it. They said, "Oh, this is just going to be grandstanding." And he and the other younger members, including yours truly, said, "No, no, no. We really need to have a public understanding for what we're doing." And we ultimately won out. And it was as a result of the public—those televised hearings, and seeing the impact that had on the public that I became much more sensitized, let's put it that way, to the impact of the press and understanding the press. So, no, I started as a complete neophyte. I don't think anybody started in Congress with as little background in terms of dealing with the media as I had. Because we couldn't afford it, I never—and, you know, they showed up—the media, on the day that I won—the day after I won the primary—on that primary evening. But then they didn't show up for a very long time. So, it took me a while to grasp the nuances. I did learn, though, I think. Maybe not as well as some people, but certainly more than when I started out.