

**The Honorable Barbara Bailey Kennelly**  
U.S. Representative of Connecticut (1982–1999)

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

**Running for the Ways and Means Committee**

Representative Kennelly explains the challenges she faced to get a seat on the Ways and Means Committee.

*Interview recorded September 9, 2015*

I didn't get onto Ways and Means. I had to run for Ways and Means. I always said it was one of the toughest elections I ever was in. Usually there would be one or two vacancies on Ways and Means and they were very sought after. Well, for some reason, when I was running for Ways and Means my first full term, there were I think 13 people running, and it was a race. It was an absolute race. And you had people, you know, special people helping you and you had to count. And a gentleman by the name of Bill Ratchford from Connecticut had tried very hard to get on Ways and Means and hadn't made it. And he was, he had a—my husband replaced him as speaker in Connecticut and we were good friends. And he said, "Barbara, I'm going to help you because I made some mistakes and I don't want you to make the same mistakes." I mean, you have to get a "yes." You can't get, "Oh, you'd make a good member of Ways and Means." And there's so many ways for people to say it, and it's not "Yes, I'm for you." And so he was very helpful. And I campaigned, I campaigned very hard. I had left a little boy in grammar school in the sixth grade to come to Congress and I wanted to make it worth it. And my girls were in high school, one was just beginning a freshman in college and, you know, I wasn't going to be down here doing nothing. This was a big deal to leave home. And so, you know, I fought very hard to get on that committee. And there were three—by the way, there were three openings. So that really had the—it was a race. And you went at it, and at it, and at it. And I won the first spot. And then Ronnie Flippo and Byron Dorgan won the others—second, third—and we became very friendly. But it was a great experience. But I'll tell you, it was hard.