

The Honorable Martha Elizabeth Keys
U.S. Representative of Kansas (1975–1979)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“Not in Tune with the Times”

Representative Keys describes the changing atmosphere in the House during the post-Watergate era and its effect on committee chairmen.

Interview recorded June 14, 2016

And you have to understand that wonderful reformers who had tried to reform the House, Dick Bolling being a big one, helped a lot in pushing the new—people in the new class who were really—the idea of calling, making all the chairmen come in and speak to the class and all of this. And then we did get rid of three of them. Not Wayne Hays, unfortunately, but I tried. But it was, it was an interesting time. I think that was terribly important because there were all these southern chairs, you know, to, to all these big committees that had just been there forever and were not in tune with the times at all. The thing that was really interesting to me, after having voted against it, Wright Patterson came—the first time I spoke on the House Floor I was going to speak on some amendment—he came up and sat by me and he said—he was very nice—he said, “I just want to sit with you here,” he said. “I think you’re going to be great.” He said, “I want you to stay here long enough to be chairman.” I, of course, had voted him off. He was just too, too old. He was a wonderful man, wonderful man, but he’d been there too long and he was a little bit out of it.