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Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Reprimanding Tip O’Neill

Judy Lemons remembers Representative Pat Schroeder of Colorado confronting Speaker Tip O’Neill of Massachusetts about gender in the House.

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Pat Schroeder had talked one—at one point about coming to Congress and saying that, “Even Tip O’Neill didn’t understand how difficult it was for a woman to come to Congress.” And people made fun of her, saying, “Oh, Pat Schroeder? They must have thought they were voting for a guy. They didn’t know that, that it was a woman they were voting for.” And, you know, a lot of ribbing like that. And she said that, that, that at one point she had to actually sort of reprimand Tip O’Neill because he would always introduce her husband and talk about everything but her. And so, she said she got up one time and had to introduce Tip’s wife—Tip and his wife—and spent the whole time talking about his wife. And then he—evidently he looked at her and said, “I got it.” So, that was—but Phil and Pat Schroeder were very, very close. She came a couple of years before, I think in the Congress before the Watergate class and, and they, they hooked up because they, they had that same liberal tenacity and championed, you know, many of the same things.