

The Honorable Jill Lynette Long Thompson
U.S. Representative of Indiana (1989–1995)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Gendered Expectations

Representative Long Thompson reveals the expectations for her as a young woman growing up in Indiana.

Interview recorded June 15, 2017

Well, I come from a family that, where no one had gone to college before me, so there really were no higher education expectations. It was just always expected that I would do my best at whatever I chose to do. And I graduated from high school before my Senator, Birch Bayh, had gotten Title IX into law—passed and signed into law—and so we didn't even have athletic programs of any magnitude for girls. I remember our high school basketball team and volleyball team. The girls teams were, would play maybe two or three games a season. And so the expectations were just so different for girls. And it—the expectations were that I would keep a house clean and that I would be a good cook. And I, I'm a pretty decent cook and I keep my house clean, but one step at a time, I started to realize what kind of opportunities there really are out there. And I happened to come of age at a time when doors were starting to open for women. And so, with a National Defense student loan and an academic scholarship, I went to college and decided if I could get an undergraduate degree, I could probably do a master's and a doctorate. And went to my, one of my state institutions and by teaching as a graduate student, I was able to completely finance my education. And one thing led to another and I ended up running for Congress.