

## **Linda Melconian**

**Assistant Counsel and Legislative Assistant, Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill, Jr., of Massachusetts**

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

#### **The Speaker and Ireland**

Linda Melconian describes her experience on a congressional delegation to the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom in April 1979.

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He wanted to see if there really—who the players were in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland, and obviously in Britain—whether or not there was an interest in moving to peace. Did they want to stop this killing? This killing was getting terrible and terrible, I mean, this bombing and stuff. And the Republic of Ireland was starting at that time, in the '70s, to turn around because of its membership with the European Union, so that was an important dimension. So Speaker O'Neill had the opportunity to go to Ireland, and another—a staff member, the, the counsel, the counsel—and I was the assistant counsel by that time. Kirk O'Donnell and I were the two staff people designated to go with him. We went to England, Belgium, Hungary, and Ireland. And he was the first—and he was the highest ranking official in the U.S. government to go to Ireland after President Kennedy did. This is before Ronald Reagan went. So we planned the trip, and we were going to be in Dublin. I mean, the Irish part of the trip was Dublin, and he was going to go up to Northern Ireland and meet with all of the leaders in Northern Ireland—the Protestant leaders, the Catholic leaders, the independent leaders, all of them. And also, we went to England, and at the time, England was undergoing an election. Margaret Thatcher was running against James Callaghan. James Callaghan was the Prime Minister, and Margaret Thatcher was running. So they were in the midst of their six-week election period. So it was a fascinating time to be there.