

## **Linda Melconian**

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

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

#### **“Nobody was Better than the Speaker”**

Linda Melconian explains Speaker Tip O'Neill's ability to connect with his colleagues.

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Members that I knew pretty well and felt comfortable talking to, I would ask them, you know, “Are you—could you be with the leadership on such-and-such a bill?” If they were iffy, and it would be interesting what they would say to me. I would convey that to the Speaker—the Whip, Leader O'Neill. And we would see if what they were saying to me was the same they had said to him, that they had said to the Leader or their zone whips, and stuff like this. So, yeah, I mean mainly it was just making sure that the Whip counts were accurate. But I mean, Speaker—Tip O'Neill would say, “Linda, go talk to so-and-so and see if, you know, see where he really is. See what, see what you think.” And he'd ask my advice. But there was nobody better than the Speaker that understood the mood of the House, that, that knew a real person from a faker—knew the phonies and the genuine people that served in the House.