

The Honorable Constance A. Morella
U.S. Representative of Maryland (1987–2003)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

"I Wasn't Supposed to Win"

Representative Morella reflects on her personable campaigning efforts in 1980.
Interview recorded June 16, 2015

I wasn't supposed to win. What, what I took from that campaign is that it was an open seat, but we had a long line of Democrats running for that seat. The one who won the nomination, he actually ended up—the dubious distinction of spending the greatest amount in a losing House race in the country. He was a multi-millionaire. He, he was in the state senate. I was in the house. He was in the majority party. I was in the minority party. And so, even though I got the endorsement of, like, the *Washington Post* and whatever, the, the polls and the attitude of the people were, "There's no way that she's going to win this election." And I think it came about through personality. I, I won't say any—I don't in mean a, a daunting personality. I meant people connection. I meant, I, I knocked on so many doors, my children would say, "Elect our mother and get her off the streets." And even now, I've had people say, "I remember you came to my house." Now, that's like 30 years ago. "You still remember that?" I used to go to the Metro, the subway stations, in the morning and I even used to have hand warmers in my pocket, so I could warm my hands before I would shake them quickly. And I remember my assistant, after I was elected, she said, "You know, somebody called and they wanted you to officiate—a man called—wanted you to officiate at his wedding." And she said, "But she doesn't have the authority to do that. How do you know the Congresswoman?" And the answer was, "I met her at the Metro station and she seemed like a nice lady." So, it's a matter of, you know, connection, connection with people. I think that did it.