

**The Honorable Sue Myrick**  
U.S. Representative of North Carolina (1995–2013)

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

**Institutional Change**

Representative Sue Myrick recalls working with other women to break House tradition surrounding women's attire.

*Interview recorded March 14, 2016*

Well, let me tell you two things. One, we learned very quickly what seats you didn't sit in because some of the guys had certain seats that they had had forever, and you never sat in that seat. I mean, that was a no-no, big-time. The other thing that, when we got here, was women couldn't wear slacks. You had to wear a skirt. And so, a lot of us didn't like that, because we were raised in a world where you wore pantsuits or slacks, you know? And so, we went to the leadership and said, "Can we start to wear slacks?" Well, the answer was, "No," whoever's in charge of that in the House. And so, some of us just decided, "We're going to start wearing slacks on the floor and see what they do." Well, anyway, we did that for a while, and finally they relented, and said that we could wear slacks or pantsuits on the floor. But it was a matter of forcing the issue. And then I used to sit there and, you know, the women who do the recording, and they weren't allowed to wear pants, slacks. They had to wear dresses. Well, they would wear dresses, and they were kind of short, and you could see the guys sitting there and looking at them. So, I went again to leadership, and I said, you know, "Why aren't they allowed to wear slacks?" "Well, it's always been the rule." So, anyway, we went through, it took about three years, but we got those women the right to wear slacks on the floor instead of wearing dresses. So, it was that kind of thing that was, it, it was a challenging fight to get done but, you know, it was part of the institution. That's the way women were. You had to wear a dress, you didn't wear slacks.