

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Women and Leadership

Representative Myrick discusses the challenges of getting women in leadership positions.
Interview recorded March 14, 2016

It's important that women be at the table because, again, we look at things differently, we bring a different perspective to it. And I think it's extremely helpful in the discussions because a lot of times you'd be sitting at the table, and somebody would bring up something that was totally never thought of before, I guess you'd say, because it wasn't in the realm of how you usually do things. And then somebody would say—and it was usually a woman—“Well, why don't you consider doing this?” And it made a difference. Women, though, in leadership, have always had a hard time. I mean, it's not easy. Because, you know, even though there are women in leadership—and, yes, Nancy Pelosi has been a Leader and a Speaker—it's been difficult for women to have their voice heard, if even if they are in leadership. And I don't know why that is, quite frankly. But I know that all the women who have been there in the past, I don't know about today because I'm not here, but in the past, complained about that. You know, “They don't listen to me.” So, and, and, you know, we were, we didn't have many, you know, committee chairmen. You know, when I first got here, the only woman that was a subcommittee chairman was Jan Meyers—remember Jan Meyers? She was a dear, too. And nobody else at that time. And then, of course, Nancy and some of the others, but it was really a fairly—even though Newt was very open—it was a slow process for that to happen because the Speaker doesn't make those decisions on his own, as you well know. It's a committee that does it. There's still a long way to go, I think, relative—let me back up. Because we were treated very well, I'm not at all criticizing anybody. The males were very kind to us, always. That wasn't a problem. But it, it is not easy for women, then, to move up to those positions, like we're talking about, you know, committee chairmen, key leadership positions, et cetera. And I think that's where we have a long way to go. I really do. But then, again, women have to be willing to run for those things, and a lot of women aren't—and especially if you're young and you have families, you know, and you've got kids to take care of, you're, you have so many dual roles. There's always, you're always torn.