

**The Honorable Mary Rose Oakar**  
U.S. Representative of Ohio (1977–1993)

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

**Different Perspective of Women**

Representative Oakar describes a meeting with President Ronald Reagan that illustrates the different perspectives women bring to Congress and negotiations.

*Interview recorded March 2, 2017*

I remember when I was at one of the meetings at the White House for leadership people. President Reagan was meeting, going to meet with Gorbachev about treaties and so on. And I had, I don't know why but I had one of my rose pens in my purse. I didn't always carry it around but it happened to be there. And, all these guys around the table said, "You go get them, go get those commies." And I said, "Mr. Chairman, I'm going to give you this rose pen. And rose is a symbol of peace. Try to make peace with them." And he put, Reagan was such a gentleman. Even if I didn't agree with him, he was so nice to me, to the point where Tip O'Neill used to get mad because he'd call on me first. I was the only woman in the room. So, but he was an absolute gentleman. So he said, "Oh, thanks, Mary Rose." So he puts it in his lapel. Do you know when he signed something he had that rose pen in his lapel? I couldn't believe it that he wore—probably just wore the same jacket. But nonetheless there is a different perspective sometimes that women bring. And that's why I think we should have more women.