

**The Honorable Elizabeth J. Patterson**  
U.S. Representative of South Carolina (1987–1993)

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

**Intricate Campaign Advertisement**

Representative Patterson describes the difficult task her campaign faced in demonstrating that she “could be a woman, a mother, and a good, tough politician.”

*Interview recorded April 3, 2017*

In that campaign, we had to prove that I could be a woman, a mother, and be a good, tough politician. So we had a, a TV spot that started off with everybody in our family—and at that point we had three children—sitting around the breakfast table fully dressed. And I was going around the table pouring orange juice for us. Well, we never were able to do that. You know, carpool’s coming, take this, you know, whatever, and grab it and go get in the car. And then the next scene was me. It was Dwight and me going out the front door, both of us with our briefcases, kissing and going off in different directions. Well, again, we never used our front door. But they did that. And then the next scene, I was in Columbia in the state house, and I was speaking on the senate floor. And then at one point I was at my desk, and several of the senators were leaning over me as we looked at a piece of legislation. It was, you know, a very—and sort of dark, communing like we were working hard on something. And then the final shot was, I was back home, sitting on the floor playing Scrabble with my children. And so that commercial supposedly showed that, you know, I could be wife, mom, and a legislator. And it paid off because my, my opponent didn’t have children at that point. His were grown. So he borrowed some children, and got them to sit around a tree with him and he read them a story. So it was very obvious that he was trying to get—but we did very well in that campaign, and because he was mayor of the city of Greenville, many of his shots, he was very formally dressed. And I just was dressing like I normally did, wherever I went out in the county or in the city. And people kept thinking, “He wears tuxedos all the time, you know. I’m not so sure he’s one of us.” So, I was able to win.