

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Convincing Women to Run for Congress

Representative Patterson speculates on why more South Carolina women haven't run for Congress and recalls her efforts to encourage women to be more active.

Interview recorded April 3, 2017

It's so funny—and we've had a governor, we've had a lieutenant governor, we have a state superintendent of education—so we have women being elected. But when you get down to a congressional district, I don't know why. We've had women running, but they just don't seem to make it. And I, I'm not sure, myself. Although I used to say, "Women didn't run because the money." You know, the idea that they have to raise that money. And it's not, women are just not comfortable raising money for themselves. And then they always use the excuses. I, I've tried to get women to run, and it's, "When my children get older." And I keep saying, "No, you don't have to wait until your children get older. You can include them." But they use that, and then sometimes they say, "I'm not smart enough. I can't do that." And I say, you know, "Look, look at Liz. I'm not by any means a scholar. You can, you can do it." So, I'm just trying to convince women. I have convinced several women to run, but they haven't had a chance.