

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Not the First Woman

Representative Patterson reflects on the history of women from South Carolina who served in Congress.
Interview recorded April 3, 2017

Well, there was so much to-do about that I was the first woman. And I always corrected it, and said, “The first woman elected for a full term in her own right.” Then I had to explain it. The reason I always corrected it is, one of those women was still living. And she was a friend. And I wanted people to not forget that we’d had women before. Now, true, one of them didn’t serve but a day, but, you know, they were there. It was, it was sort of interesting. For a while, you know, sort of, people would say something about it, but then now whenever I get introduced someplace, they use it, you know. And people understand what they’re saying. You almost have to stop and say, you know, I always, always add, “And they were elected because their husband died. And, you know, in my case, luckily, my husband didn’t die, so I could serve a full term.” Because that’s the sad, the sad part of that story.