

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Analyzing the Polls

Representative Patterson reveals the importance of polls in understanding the role of gender in her first House campaign.

Interview recorded April 3, 2017

Of course, we had a, a tough campaign, but a very successful campaign. And, that was when my being a woman really came out. They would, we did a poll, first of all, to see if I had a chance. And the poll said that people still remembered my dad. That a certain age remembered my dad and what he did, and that they would support me because of that. So that was good news. Then they said that—and again, it was interesting how it broke down. Certain ages didn't think I should go because I should stay home with my family. You know, older women thought that I should stay home. The younger women were a little bit hesitant for another, for other reasons, and, you know, they just weren't sure I knew . . . But the polls also showed that they didn't think I'd be strong on the budget, you know, which is a typical thing. You know, women can't balance their budget. So, the, the polls were really interesting. But we played to them.