Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Early Fundraising Experience
Representative Ros-Lehtinen describes her early fundraising efforts as a Member of Congress.
Interview recorded April 16, 2018

Early years, fundraising was an obstacle. I was, I had not had any experience in fundraising. My parents did not know how to fundraise, so thank goodness for that campaign school. And they taught—we had a whole day that was just dedicated to fundraising. And you asked your friends and you asked your family, and, and you build on that. And you’re very frugal with your expenses. And because our, our campaign was really run in our kitchen, at our dining room table, we didn’t have many expenses. We didn’t have a, a, a, a campaign office and we didn’t have paid people. Everyone was a volunteer, so expenses were low. And, and then, in those old days—I mean we’re talking 40 years ago—mailing, we had to be very specific. I wanted to make sure that I could reach these, the voters that I thought were going to be voting for me. And we did not have the kinds of sophistication that we have now. Now, I could target, you know, just about—I’m exaggerating, but blonde, give me the voters who are blonde hair and blue eyed, not really but you could, who voted in the last 10 elections—in the last 10 presidential elections. You could get a list of voters that are so specific. We didn’t have that kind of computer programming then, so we did fundraisers that are just friends and family, and we kept our costs way low.