

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
U.S. Representative of Florida (1989–2019)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Working Mom

Representative Ros-Lehtinen discusses the obstacles she faced when running for Congress as a mother with young children.

Interview recorded April 16, 2018

When I ran, first for Congress in 1989, I was, I was fairly young, I guess by, by my standards I was young, and I had two young children, two and three years old. It was not positive. Nobody was saying, “Oh how great, you’re going to DC, when you have a two year old and a three year old, good for you.” No, it was not—and we debated, do we put the kids in the—and I said, “They’re, they’re our kids, we’re going to put the family photo.” But, there was a lot of discussions that this was not going to go over well, that people still believed that a, a woman’s place was in the home. And the home was not the House of Representatives. The home was *tu casa*, where you were living. So, it was, it was an issue. I think it’s still an issue. People are still thinking, “Gosh, stay home and take care of your kids.” And I think I did take care of my kids and they came up with me and we did the best we could. And every working mom goes through all of this. I was blessed to have wonderful parents and a supportive spouse, so I’m not a typical working mom. It’s so hard for women everywhere, no matter what you do. It’s a wonder to me that, that we survive because the, the odds are stacked against us, but we will survive.