

**The Honorable Patricia Saiki**  
**U.S. Representative of Hawaii (1987–1991)**

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**Leading the Small Business Administration (SBA)**

Representative Saiki recalls her decision to become director of the Small Business Administration (SBA) in 1991.

*Interview recorded September 20, 2018*

I lost that one to Dan Akaka and in a way it's okay. Dan Akaka, you know, was a loyal Hawaiian Democrat. And I came home then. I thought, "Well, I'll take a little break." No sooner am I cooking breakfast and the phone rings. My daughter answers the phone. She says, "Mom, the President wants to talk to you." So I said, "Okay, what President is that?" She goes back to the phone, comes back and says, "The President of the United States wants to talk to you." I said, "Oh, my God." It was the President and he wanted me to come back to Washington. He said, "No, no, no, you've got to come back to Washington, and you can have a choice of whatever position you would like. I want you in my administration." This is, you know, prior to his departure. And—so I said that's fine. So he listed for me the choices I had, and one of them was the administrator of the United States Small Business Administration. Well, 95 percent of the businesses in Hawaii are small businesses. So rather than Secretary of Labor or any of these other high-flown cabinet positions I felt that head—being head of the Small Business Administration would do the best—most for my state. So I said, "Okay, I'll do that one." So back we went to Washington and that's how I became head of the Small Business Administration.