

**The Honorable Claudine Schneider**  
U.S. Representative of Rhode Island (1981–1991)

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

**"A Wait–and–See Attitude"**

Representative Schneider remembers interacting with male Members shortly after her arrival in Congress.  
*Interview recorded January 20, 2015*

We, four new women, were oddities, curiosities. So, I think the men sort of took a wait–and–see attitude, you know? And then I remember being appointed as a freshman to the first task force on campaign finance reform. And for the first meeting or two, I mostly listened rather than participated. And I remember one of the, the guys on the committee coming up to me afterwards, and saying, "You know, the reality is that I pay a lot of attention to what you say because you are—you had to do the same amount of work, you had to raise as much money, you had to work as hard as I did to get here, so you are owed my respect." Which I thought was pretty interesting for him to verbalize that. Some guys may have thought that, but, you know, for him to verbalize it was pretty nice. But the other thing that was interesting is that, in those meetings, one of the things I would observe is that sometimes I would offer up an idea, and then a couple of minutes later, one of the guys would repeat the same thing I said, and then everybody would say, "Well, yeah, that's a good idea, Joe. Let's, let's go with that." And occasionally there would be a guy in the room that would say, "Wait a minute. Time out. Claudine said that 15 minutes ago." I thought, "Yes. Thank you." So, you know, it was, it was a mix. And, for the most part, there, there was complete equality. Not the kind of partisanship and rancor that there is today.