

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

"Congress Needs a Conscience"

Representative Schneider shares a memory of Representative Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey.
Interview recorded January 20, 2015

In another encounter—I can't say that she was a mentor, mentor because she was—pretty, pretty much stayed to herself—and that was Millicent Fenwick, a Congresswoman from New Jersey. And I was the youngest woman. I think she was the oldest woman. But I remember her coming up to me once, and she said, "Well, I'm not going to be here forever. So, I'm passing the baton to you. You better be the conscience of this body because Congress needs a conscience." And it was, "What? Oh! Okay." But that was rather intimidating, but extremely thought-provoking because I thought, "Well, wait a second. That is the reason that I'm here anyway. You know, not to play a game. Not to get some notches in my belt, but to make a difference, and try to bring some humanity to this body."