

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

"Wait a Minute, I Am a Feminist"

Representative Schneider recalls being motivated to address inequalities in the law for women.
Interview recorded January 20, 2015

And then when I came to Congress, you know, I realized, "Wow, there, there are a lot of inequities." Not insofar as how I was treated, but more in terms of the laws themselves. You know, "Well, what about making sure that women have access to education, or scholarships, or this or that? And what do you mean, you want to tell a woman what she can do with her body? That's not the role of government. You know, that doesn't belong here." So, yes, there were many things that opened my eyes as a young, you know, woman in a governing body that had, you know, dominion over the country and the world. So, and then, you know, interacting with many non-profit organizations, from Oxfam, who works on, you know, poverty, and women, and children, that I am involved with now, and many other women's organizations bringing to light the, the inequities that exist—that's when it all kind of happened. And then I thought, "Wait a minute, I am a feminist. We've got to straighten this out."