

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

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

**Motivation to Run for Congress**

Representative Schneider explains how she asked Members why they ran for national office and the different answers she received from men and women.

*Interview recorded January 20, 2015*

I want to mention something else about the, the women in office, and that is, I was very curious about what motivated the women to run for office because I knew my motivation was quite different than most people's. So, I remember one day, some of us were meeting, and I remember saying to Bobbi Fiedler, "Why did you run for Congress?" And she said, "You know, I was going nuts out in California. I was looking at what the transportation situation was. I really thought that there ought to be some federal involvement in changing this and that." And I thought, "That's interesting." And then I asked Marge Roukema, I said, "Marge, what about you?" And she said, "Well, I have some kids in school, and I'd always been involved in their education, and paying attention to, you know, the school board, and federal involvement in education. And I thought, 'Wow, I could really do something about the education system in our country.' So, that's what motivated me to run." And I thought, "Well, that's interesting." And so, it was woman after woman who identified a problem they wanted to solve—a specific problem. And then I thought, "Well, that's curious. I'm going to ask the guys." So, then I started asking some of my male friends, "Well, why did you run for Congress?" And one guy said, "Oh, well, my family was always involved in politics, so, it just seemed like the natural thing to do." And I thought, "Okay." And then I asked another guy, and he said, "Well, when I was in college I, you know, thought, 'It would be interesting to run for mayor because I had already, you know, been the president of my class.' And I thought, 'Maybe I'll run for mayor, and then I'll run for Congress. Who knows? Maybe someday I'll run for the Presidency.'" So, there was a distinction there. The women were motivated to solve problems. The men seemed to have been motivated to further a career, to satisfy the ego. And I thought, "This is very interesting."