

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

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

**Turning Point**

Representative Schneider describes an event that sparked support of women during her campaign in 1980.

*Interview recorded January 20, 2015*

In campaigns, they always say to the incumbents, "Ignore your opponent." So, I was obviously being ignored, until one day, I was at a Greek church festival. And I loved going to the church festivals where you could meet everybody, and dance, and have a good time. So, I was out campaigning, and my opponent showed up, and he came over to me, and he said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, I'm working hard, so that I could be the next Congresswoman." And he said, "Ah, forget about it. You ought to go home because pretty soon you'll be scrubbing floors and washing dishes." Well, it just so happened that there was a reporter from the *Providence Journal* within earshot. He heard that, wrote the story, and the next day when I was campaigning at one of the large grocery stores—or sort of department stores—all of these blue-collar women, who previously had ignored me, or sort of looked the other way, when they came out of the grocery store, and they saw me, they said, "Right on, girl. You go, girl. Go get 'em." And to me, it said, you know, "All right, we may scrub floors, we may wash dishes, but we can do more than that." And that resonated with a lot of other women.