

The Honorable Patricia Scott Schroeder
U.S. Representative of Colorado (1973–1997)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Women and the Bicentennial

Representative Schroeder describes the ways gender roles shaped the Bicentennial programs.
Interview recorded June 3, 2015

The first committee they gave me was like a “nothing burger” committee. I mean, you’re a freshman, what can they give you? They gave me Commemorative Days and Holidays. Okay. So nobody paid much attention, except, we were going into the Bicentennial. So, I got busy and we did all sorts of things. We were kicking stuff out. And Jackie Onassis had edited a book called *Remember the Ladies*, which was from Abigail’s—Abigail Adams’ letter to John Adams, when they were writing the Constitution. Of course, he didn’t but at least she tried. And it was about colonial women and women’s history. And it was an excellent book and we thought that this should be the book, when it comes out. Anyway, “pass that through, Pat.” And all went through the House because nobody was paying much attention. It was like, “We don’t have to be on the floor for this, we’ll just, it’s just voice vote.” So, I never really—all of a sudden I get this invitation to come to Katharine Graham’s house. So I think well I must be a really important freshman. And I get there and here’s Katharine at one end of the table and Jacqueline Onassis at the other end of the table, and all these Senators, and the issue was, they weren’t going to have any part of her book. And I remember sitting there listening to this thinking, “What am I doing here?” These are probably the two most powerful women I can think of in this city, and these Senators are saying, “No.” And they’re telling them very nicely, things like, “Now our vision for women for the Bicentennial is beautification projects,” you know. And we were all like, you know, “We can beautify and read, we could do both. You know we could really—we think we could work all of this together. We’re not against beautification. We just think we could do a little more than that. A lot of us are educated now, we can read, you know?” They had no part of it.