

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“Year of the Woman” and Incremental Gains

Representative Schroeder discusses the slow rise in the number of women in Congress.
Interview recorded June 3, 2015

Well, it was very exciting, and of course that was, I think this, the fallout from the whole hearings that we just talked about, the hearings with Clarence Thomas. People were so mad about Anita Hill's treatment. So a lot of women got elected, and yet even then, we were not 10 percent of the House. And so I remember walking out there as they're swearing them all in, and one of my colleagues said to me, "Well I hope you're happy, this place is starting to look like a shopping center." I said to him, "Where do you shop, where only 10 percent of the women, of the people are women?" "Really, it looks like a shopping mall to you?" Yeah, so there were some people really kind of shocked by it. And you know, when I first got elected, I was in this really idealistic mode of isn't this wonderful? How long do you think it will be before almost half of the House is female? And so I asked the Library of Congress or somebody, what they thought, and they said probably 300 years. Well, I don't know, but I'm beginning to believe maybe they were right, because it has been very incremental, very incremental.