

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Generational Divide

Representative Schroeder relays her surprise at the generational divide between women Members.
Interview recorded June 3, 2015

I remember sitting down next to the then dean of the women, who was a, a woman named Leonor Sullivan from Missouri, and she was the chairman of a committee. And, you know, I come along, "I'm Pat Schroeder, I'm new here, and you're my dean, what should I call you?" She said, "My name is Mrs. John Sullivan." And I said, "Yeah, I know that. What should I call you?" She said, "You can call me by my name. My name is Mrs. John Sullivan." So I thought, well we're not going to have a lot of bonding here. You know, we had, at that time, I think it was almost half of the women here had inherited—not inherited really, but had run for their husband's seats after their husband had died. And, not all of them, but some of them, like Mrs. John Sullivan, thought they weren't just the woman. They were carrying forward, his agenda, whatever that was. So there were the Patsy Minks and the Bella Abzugs, and Shirley Chisholm. Yes, there was a nice bonding there, and then there's the others. Oh, Martha, I mean, from Michigan. She was terrific, Martha Griffiths. But there was the other group that wasn't quite there yet, and that's why we didn't have a women's caucus. I mean, 14 was small enough, but if you take about half of them out, that's seven. We've got to at least have double digits. So it took a while to get a women's caucus going.