

Allyson Y. Schwartz
U.S. Representative of Pennsylvania (2005–2015)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Changing Expectations

Representative Schwartz speaks about how her generation navigated changing gender roles resulting from the women's rights movement.

Interview recorded April 12, 2017

But it really was a time of changing expectations for women, and a real understanding that we needed to step up. We didn't use that language then, but to be a part of the world, and to defy expectations that had to do with women's rights, and women's reproductive rights. I agreed with that and felt strongly about it. Participated in some demonstrations where I went to college in Boston, and some in Washington, as well. And felt very much the small and large questions that we asked ourselves, the conversations I had both in college and with friends in graduate school about what is our role as women? Where do we take it? Do we change our name when we get married? Should we get married? How do we actually balance family and, and our desire for love and marriage and children with expectations about our own empowerment? And how did that, how do we make that happen? I was sort of with the generation that embraced that and tried to figure it out. And it was hard. We also thought we had to be superwomen, and, and really do both. We didn't want to give up anything. But we were really challenging expectations, both in our families—my family expected me to go to college, to graduate, but then to get married. You know, so, like well, but my mother certainly said, "You need to be independent. You need to have a career. You need to think about that, even as you marry." And I did.