

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Qualified to Lead

Representative Schwartz reveals how women candidates needed to convince people they could succeed in politics despite their gender.

Interview recorded April 12, 2017

So, again, I had a primary. And, but I did have some political support, more in the suburbs actually. But it was divided. There were people who still thought that my opponent was really terrific, and that supported him. And could a woman do this, again? We had no women in our congressional delegation from Pennsylvania at the time. I think there were 20 Members in the delegation, and no women. So, where's the role models? Who does this? Could I do it? When I ran for the state senate, people asked me, I had one person ask me, "You seem too nice. Can you do this political thing?" I thought, what a great question, actually. You know people—you know, there's not always a positive feeling about politics. Can you, do you have sharp enough elbows? Can you get in there and get things done? Congress was some of the same things. Could I do this? Less of a question because I had been a legislator. I think there's a little more of acceptance of women in legislative roles. But, still, it was a step up.