

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Significance of the First Woman Speaker

Representative Schwartz discusses the importance of a woman serving as Speaker of the House.
Interview recorded April 12, 2017

It was an extraordinary moment for women in Congress to see Nancy Pelosi be the, the Speaker. It really was. I actually remember being with her the night before, and being able to have that sort of funny conversation, like, “What color suit do you think I should wear?” This is kind of monumental, but her interest was to bring her grandchildren and the children in Congress to the, to the podium with her, and she did relay the story that the Parliamentarian wasn’t sure that was allowed. He had never been asked that question. There wasn’t a rule on it, so it wasn’t not allowed, but it wasn’t allowed. So, she, I forget, you know, there must have been some sort of reception, and a group of us were sort of standing around, and she was saying, “I don’t yet know whether I’m going to actually do it.” Because, again, I think even for her in this very powerful moment was, you don’t want to be gavelled down by the Parliamentarian telling you, you can’t do it. That’s kind of not going to look great on TV. And you don’t you—and she is somebody who is very respectful of this institution, and of the rules, and, and the procedures, and knowledgeable about that. So, and yet you do want this to be a moment that really symbolizes who she is, what she cares about, what it means to girls, and boys, I hope. And so, when she did it, it was just great. It was just great. So, it was, so I feel it was a very important moment for all of us.