

The Honorable Sue W. Kelly
U.S. Representative of New York (1995–2007)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“There Were No Women on that Committee”

Representative Kelly explains how gender could serve as an obstacle in Congress.
Interview recorded June 23, 2016

I will tell you that when I want, what I really wanted, after two years and I was re-elected, that, that second term, I wanted to change. I wanted to get on the, the committees that I had background in. I wanted to get on the House—the, what it was, it was then Energy and Commerce, but it had all the medical stuff. And I wanted to get on that committee. And the chairman of that at the time was a man from Virginia who was a good ol' boy. And when Newt Gingrich asked him to put me on the committee, I am going to—once again one of his staffers wrote down what he said and then read it to me later. And what he said was, “Like—” in a, in a strong southern accent, he said, “Like hell I’ll put a northeast, moderate, pro-choice woman on my committee! Hell no!” That was it. There was no woman on his committee until Barbara Cubin eventually managed to—I think maybe her third term, Barbara managed to get on that committee. There were no women on that committee.