

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

New Perspective in the Whip's Office

Representative Kelly describes the Republican whip operation under Representative Tom DeLay of Texas while she served in the House.

Interview recorded June 23, 2016

Well, I thank God that Tom allowed me to be a whip because it helped me be a much better legislator, that's the first thing. And the second thing is that we were, everybody was kind of putting it together. There was this innocence about how to run the government, and everybody was trying to put it together so that things would flow smoothly. And, of course, because they had no experience, they were bound to make mistakes. And they did. And the perspective that I had from being in—as a whip—in Tom's office was, allowed me to understand and appreciate what was going on in a way that I never would have if I hadn't been there. They, it was, Tom's office was very relaxed. Denny Hastert was his, his, his deputy whip, and we all got along with each other. We had a lot of laughs. Tom set the precedent for calling a Whip meeting and at least giving everybody something to eat when we got there because we were all starving at that point. And it was something that—how can I describe it? Some of the staffers knew more about the operation of Capitol Hill than—I wouldn't say Tom. Tom was pretty savvy. I think Tom in many ways was more savvy about operating, how to operate on Capitol Hill than Newt was. Newt was a dynamo. He had ideas and he pushed hard, but I think Tom, Tom understood the politics of being in charge of Capitol Hill.