

The Honorable Linda Smith
U.S. Representative of Washington (1995–1999)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“A Man’s World”

Representative Smith reflects on the challenges faced by women in politics when she served in the state legislature and in Congress.

Interview recorded September 18, 2019

So most of us were used to working in, I’m going to say a man’s world. We’re used to where we were the only woman. I was one of a handful of women at the state senate leader—well, there were two of us, but as the total number of women in the Washington state legislature at that time wasn’t very high compared to what it is today. So you’re used to working in gender as a minority, walking in a room and having your chief of staff, if you walk towards a group, them think that he is the senator simply because he’s a male. You’re kind of used to that kind of thing because you’ve lived with it. And so it, it causes you to really be defensive for women to, to get that bathroom in to, to require certain things happen.