

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Women Pathbreakers

Representative Smith recalls how she fought for equal access to facilities for women members in the Washington state legislature.

Interview recorded September 18, 2019

When I was elected to the state senate they didn't even have a women's bathroom off of the floor and I had to make a motion and push to take the Lieutenant Governor's office to make a bathroom. And the first thing that was said to me is, "If you want to be like a man then you go in the members' lounge. You're a member." You know, and these are all men that will have no privacy then and, and the idea that that would be the answer. Then someone else said, "You know it's, it's just inconvenient. There is a bathroom." And really it was a, it was the closet where all the mops and things—janitor's closet and there was a toilet behind it. And I said, "Well, no, not really, we're not going to do that." So, I ended up proceeding to make a very loud noise about it and make motions and it happened. We, we did end up with a women's lounge and yes, the Lieutenant Governor has an office, just not there.