

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“We’re Very Powerful”

Representative Smith recalls the effectiveness of collective efforts by women to combat problems like domestic violence.

Interview recorded September 18, 2019

When we do, we’re very powerful like we were in the domestic violence movement. We, we’re more likely to change the language. So, the language was “domestic disturbance,” right? Changing that one word and making sure that got in the criminal law of each state and requiring that change came from women all over of all different backgrounds. And the understanding that a home, it could be conservative or liberal, and there could be violence in that home and the woman would probably not be able to have an income because she probably traditionally raised children. And even if she had a degree she wouldn’t be able to raise enough money to get those children raised by herself and the courts would not lean nicely to her anyway. So if he leaves, he takes everything. So, that led to the pension reform.