

Nicola S. (Niki) Tsongas
U.S. Representative of Massachusetts (2007–2019)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“You Don’t Arrive as a Member of Congress”

Representative Tsongas discusses the learning curve facing newly-elected Members to Congress.
Interview recorded January 18, 2018

You know, I, if, if I look back on how I, sort of the way in which I have served, I, I can’t say that there was any particular mentor, but people often ask who mentored me, and my answer has always been, I served, I lived with the best role model you could ever have. So, I think by virtue of having been so much a part, not only of Paul’s campaigns, but sort of there as he was navigating, it served me well. It served me well. His voice was always somehow in my head. I, I, one of the things I’ve often said is when you first get here—and it’s because I had watched Paul grow into the office—you don’t arrive as a Member of Congress, you’ve earned the right to become one. And that becoming takes time and it takes a lot of hard work on the part of the Member. There is a lot you have to learn. You know, we’re citizen legislators. We come with this particular avenue of, you know, professional interest that we’ve had, our own experiences, but we get here, and we have to deal with the whole of it. And you just can’t do that overnight and learn everything you need to learn overnight to do your job and do it well. So, I was aware of that.