Nicola S. (Niki) Tsongas  

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Drawn to Politics  
Representative Tsongas explains how she first became interested in politics. 
*Interview recorded January 18, 2018*

My father had been stationed in Tokyo, Japan. And my grandmother was coming to live with us at that point, so this is in the summer of 1960, and we’re on a ship, crossing the Pacific Ocean. She and I were staying up late to play cards. And this one evening, we heard over the loudspeaker—and we were on a Navy ship, there was, it was barebones, there was nothing fancy about it—but we were both up late at night, playing cards, as we did into the wee hours, and I happened to hear John Kennedy—JFK’s acceptance speech, at the Democratic Convention. I could not tell you what he said. I have no recollection of any individual word, but I have, I can forever hear his voice. And I, like many, was captivated by his presidency. I think so saddened by his, his sudden death. And I think drew me to the Democratic Party. My, my parents had been Republicans. My husband often said, as his parents were, that he grew up in a disadvantaged household, his parents were Republicans. I never felt it quite that way, but nevertheless, I think it was the presidency of John Kennedy, in my high school years that really drew me to politics.