

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Changing Legislative Schedules

Representative Tsongas reflects on the family life of Members when her husband served in Congress.
Interview recorded January 18, 2018

It was really a different era. In that era, both in the House and the Senate, the workweek was, the legislative workweek was really a full week. Now we're in an era where we're literally here three and a half days a week. And so as a result, most families stay back in their districts, because the Members, the Senator or the Member of Congress, you know, have to make their way back because their families are there, but also because they need to connect with voters. But when Paul was in office, it was a full week and so most families because of that moved here so they could spend those five days a week at least with their, their loved one. So, we did live here. We lived here for 10 years. Both while Paul was in the House, and the Senate. Our kids went to school here, started school here, went to school here. And Paul would then travel on the weekends, so often be gone on the weekends, but always home at a pretty reasonable hour at night. Again, because they were here all week, you know, they weren't going into late, late hours as we now do. Paul would be home by 6:00 or 7:00. He would head into the office about 5:00 or 6:00, no excuse me, about, you know, 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning, so he could walk the kids to school, put them, help read a story at night. So we lived here, and we lived in a neighborhood that was peopled with Members of, of Congress. So, it was a very, very different lifestyle, life than it is now for Members.