

The Honorable Lynn C. Woolsey
U.S. Representative of California (1993–2013)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Making a Choice

Representative Woolsey remembers choosing to focus on her district instead of correcting the paternalism she witnessed in the House.

Interview recorded March 7, 2016

When I first got here, and I had, I told you that I'd helped people I'd worked with, the guys and all that, you know, become current on how to treat a woman, and how to, you know, everything wasn't him, and, you know, all this stuff. When I got here, in 1993, it was like, "Oh my gosh. This is a real male clique." I mean, that's—and I knew I had a choice. I could keep on teaching all men how to be good humans and, or I could get something done for my district. And so I let, I let the teaching go. I stopped. I stopped correcting men that said the wrong—called women "girls." I mean, I stopped it all. Just it was too much. It was too ingrained here. But I didn't, wasn't able to go home and tell my women friends, who would—in, in the women's group—"How has it been?" "Oh, it's fine. You know, we're all the same." Because it would have broken their hearts that I didn't go there to change these dudes. Because I just, it would, it was not possible. And little by little, and younger men started getting elected; things got better. But, yeah, oh, it was tough at first.