

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

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**Protest in the Senate**

Representative Woolsey recalls visiting the Senate with other House Members to discuss discrimination against women with Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

*Interview recorded March 7, 2016*

Senator Helms, and I have tried, and tried, and it was for the convention to protect women against all discrimination—the UN convention. And that was my, my legislation. And we had, every woman in Congress signed on to it. So, but he wouldn't, I wanted to talk to him about why he wouldn't pass it, and, you know, or even have a hearing on it. So, he wouldn't see us. So, we knew he was having a hearing on something else. Nancy came, Nancy Pelosi, and me, and Patsy, and a, a bunch of us. And so we had a, made a poster, a big old poster, and we called it, it's CEDAW (Convention to End Discrimination against All Women). And we said, you know, "Vote, vote for CEDAW." And so there was no place to sit in his hearing room because it was full, so we stood across the back with our poster. And he said to me, "You sit down, young woman, or I'm going to call the Capitol Police to come in here and remove you." And we said, "Well, we're just standing. We're just standing here, Mr. Chairman. We were waiting to have, have a meeting with you." "Oh!" Well, so the Capitol Police started coming in, so we left, but yeah, he didn't want us—he would not talk about it. And it was because they had some conviction that if they passed this, we'd be saying all women in the world could have abortions. And it had nothing to do with that. But he wouldn't even hear us out. So, we almost passed it once, when Madeleine Albright was Secretary of State. And we, the Senate almost got it that far, but then they didn't. It's hard to make the Senate do what the House wants sometimes.