

The Honorable Martha Elizabeth Keys
U.S. Representative of Kansas (1975–1979)

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript
June 14, 2016

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

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Abstract

One of the large number of Democratic freshmen elected to the House in 1974 in the wake of the Watergate scandal, Martha Elizabeth Keys quickly stood out among her colleagues when she became only the second woman to serve on the influential Ways and Means Committee. Much of Keys' oral history focuses on her tenure on Ways and Means where she recalls the heavy workload of the panel and compares the leadership of two committee chairmen, Dan Rostenkowski and Al Ullman.

The sister-in-law of Colorado Senator Gary Hart, Keys gained valuable political experience in Kansas as a volunteer for George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign. Keys' skillful work for McGovern garnered the attention of national politicians like Representative Patricia Schroeder of Colorado who suggested that Keys run for Congress. In her interview, Keys reflects on her three campaigns for a Kansas House seat, including observations of the role of gender and the assistance she received from her family. The Kansas Congresswoman made headlines in 1976 when she married fellow Representative Andy Jacobs of Indiana. Keys describes the challenges she faced in marrying a House colleague who also served on Ways and Means. A founding member of the Congresswomen's Caucus, Keys speaks about its formation and about the role of women in Congress during the 1970s.

Biography

KEYS, Martha Elizabeth, (wife of Andrew Jacobs, Jr.), a Representative from Kansas; born Martha Elizabeth Ludwig in Hutchinson, Reno County, Kans., August 10, 1930; graduated from Paseo High School, Kansas City, Mo., 1945; attended Olivet College, Kankakee, Ill., 1946–1947; B.A., University of Missouri, Kansas City, Mo., 1951; elected as a Democrat to the Ninety-fourth and to the Ninety-fifth Congresses (January 3, 1975–January 3, 1979); unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the Ninety-sixth Congress in 1978; special adviser to the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, February 1979–May 1980; Assistant Secretary of Education, June 1980–January 1981; consultant; director, Center for a New Democracy, 1985–1986.

[Read full biography](#)

Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The first reference to a Member of Congress (House or Senate) is underlined in the oral history transcript. For more information about individuals who served in the House or Senate, please refer to the online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov> and the “People Search” section of the History, Art & Archives website, <http://history.house.gov>.

For more information about the U.S. House of Representatives oral history program contact the Office of House Historian at (202) 226-1300, or via email at history@mail.house.gov.

Citation Information

When citing this oral history interview, please use the format below:

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Interviewer Biographies

Matt Wasniewski is the Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives, a position he has held since 2010. He has worked in the House as a historical editor and manager since 2002. Matt served as the editor-in-chief of *Women in Congress, 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), *Black Americans in Congress, 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008), and the *Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822–2012* (GPO, forthcoming 2013). He helped to create the House’s first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of current and former Members, longtime staff, and support personnel. He earned his Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2004. His prior work experience includes several years as the associate historian and communications director at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, and, in the early 1990s, as the sports editor for a northern Virginia newspaper.

Kathleen Johnson is the Manager of Oral History for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a B.A. in history from Columbia University, where she also played basketball for four years, and holds two master’s degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create the House’s first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: *Women in Congress: 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006) and *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008). Before joining the Office of the Historian, she worked as a high school history teacher and social studies curriculum consultant.

— THE HONORABLE MARTHA ELIZABETH KEYS OF KANSAS —
A CENTURY OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

JOHNSON: My name is Kathleen Johnson. I'm here today with Matthew Wasniewski, the Historian of the House. The date is June 14, 2016, and we are here with former Representative Martha [Elizabeth] Keys of Kansas, and we are conducting an interview for a series that we're doing to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Jeannette Rankin's election to Congress. And we are in Martha Keys' home in Virginia and are very happy to be here. Thank you for letting us come out here today.

WASNIEWSKI: Thanks for hosting us.

KEYS: Good to have you.

JOHNSON: So to start off with today, what we were interested in knowing is when you were young, if you had any role models and what particularly drew you to those people.

KEYS: Interesting. Well, I certainly had never thought of being a Member of Congress. Had no aspirations in that direction. I had a very well-educated father—religious, affiliated with church always. So I had a lot of those kinds of influences. Some of them, which I later compared with other friends of mine, [Walter Frederick] Fritz Mondale, George [Stanley] McGovern, who grew up in that kind of a family, a very religious family. All agreed that what does seem to last is the idea that you need to do things to make the world better. You need to make an effort to improve things. I think that's very true.

But I didn't have particular role models. I married young. I went to school very young. I graduated. I was married at 18, graduated from high school at 15, that type of thing. So in that era, even though I was a bright young child,

you didn't have the encouragement to think about many things as a woman. I think back about it a lot, how different, and thank goodness it is today.

JOHNSON: What were the expectations for what you would be when you grew up as a young woman?

KEYS: I didn't know of any particularly. My father was the influence in my life and a very strong influence in teaching me everything. A very benevolent father, never dictatorial in any way. And it was just keep learning, make intelligent decisions. But I wasn't slotted to do anything particularly. Nobody put that in my mind, nor did I have it.

JOHNSON: What did you want to be when you were young and you were dreaming about your future life?

KEYS: {laughter} Interestingly enough, I was always interested in medicine. I don't know why. My children used to joke about it and thought I always wanted one of them to be a doctor. I didn't particularly, but they used to joke and say, "No, we're not being a doctor, Mom." But I was always interested in that for some reason.

WASNIEWSKI: How did you first become interested in politics? Was there something in your childhood that sparked that?

KEYS: My parents were Republicans, active but not avid. And they always voted. My father certainly talked about it at times, but not through them. Interestingly enough, my first two votes for President were cast for [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. Of course, I lived in Kansas City, Missouri. But I got interested in thinking a little bit more about politics and decided I was certainly not a Republican; I was a Democrat. And after that, I kept my interest up and was active in small waves.

WASNIEWSKI: Was there someone in particular who acted as a mentor for you at some point?

KEYS: Beg your pardon?

WASNIEWSKI: Was there someone who acted as a mentor for you at some point in terms of politics?

KEYS: No, I don't believe so. Not really a mentor in that time. Actually, my husband [Sam Keys] was quite interested in politics. He had a political science undergraduate major. He became a teacher. He possibly encouraged my talking about it. But I wouldn't call him a mentor. But the fact that he was actively interested in it encouraged my growing interest to the point of talking about it, talking about the issues.

JOHNSON: We read that you had worked on the George McGovern presidential campaign. How did you become involved in that?

KEYS: Well, certainly Gary [Warren Hart] and my sister [Lee] were a big help because he had already signed on for his campaign, and I was in Washington for some reason, and they had George and Eleanor [McGovern] over for dinner when I was there. So I met them both and thought a lot of them. You know, that helped. I was certainly always interested in his kind of politics and was thoughtful about him before, but that certainly cemented the interest.

I went back and became active, and we managed to get quite a lot of delegates for McGovern out of Kansas, which was amazing because Kansas was not a state that was going to ever vote for McGovern. But it was quite rewarding. I ran the state for him on purely a voluntary position. Nobody—there was no pay for anything. But we had a good team, and we worked to grow a lot of volunteers and some donors, and we sent a lot of people in to

some big things he had in Kansas City, Missouri. So it was very rewarding—extremely rewarding.

And, of course, that got me much more acquainted with people in the Democratic Party all across the state because I was very careful to make all activities known to all of the regular Democratic chairmen, even though they weren't at all for McGovern. But I certainly helped bridge and make some relationships with a lot of people in the Democratic Party around the state that I had not been involved with at all before.

JOHNSON: What did you learn from that experience?

KEYS: I don't know how to put that. It was an interesting experience in that it was very clear from the beginning that there wasn't a shot that that state was going to end up going for him. I mean, that was just clear if you knew the history, everything about Kansas. But it was still very rewarding to work at it. And the biggest thing is he was . . . the first time in my life that there was a man who became the candidate, miraculously, who to me was just perfect for the job. I'd voted Democratic for a long time, but I never felt that about anyone else—probably didn't until Barack Obama.

But I can't tell you what I learned other than the importance of reaching out to everyone, bringing everyone together, keeping everybody together even though their views were different—certainly being as inclusive as you could.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned Gary Hart. Did he encourage you after that to run for political office?

KEYS: No, not at all. I really hadn't thought about running, and I was so appalled. My predecessor, [William Robert] Bill Roy, was very good. I worked closely with him, supported him, you know, was active in some of his things. And

there were four young men. Most of them were out of the attorney general's office. At that time, we didn't have a very good attorney general. He was the one that closed the air over Kansas to drinks if you remember that.¹ He was a mess. They were the only ones running for that office. And I was horrified.

I happened to have gone out to see Lee and Gary [Hart]. Gary was already campaigning [for President], of course. And I met [Patricia Scott] Pat Schroeder. Pat encouraged me to run [for Congress]. I hadn't really thought about running at all. And I got out there, and in the milieu of meeting and talking, and Pat was encouraging me, "You should be running for that office."

I went home, and I hadn't been home but a couple of days until I had a call from a local reporter saying, "I hear you're thinking about running for Congress." I just thought right then I either say, "Yes, I'm thinking about it," and do something about it, or I say, "No, I have no interest." And I said, "Yes, I'm giving it some thought."

And I immediately talked to political science friends of mine at the university. They did kind of a quick survey. I wasn't interested in running if being a woman—you wouldn't have thought that was a great district for a woman to run in at that time. If that was going to be self-defeating, I had no interest in doing that. And they did a quick survey, as well as could be done. They were well-educated people, used to doing that kind of research. And they said, "No, I don't think it would be at all." So anyway, I decided to and started working at it. But that wasn't until, I think, May, it had to be about May, I think.

JOHNSON: Did Pat Schroeder offer you any advice once you decided to jump in the ring?

KEYS: Not that I remember. She was just urging me first to think about running, and then she said, “You ought to run.”

JOHNSON: Did anyone else offer you any advice?

KEYS: Well, I asked lots of people for advice. And one of my good friends, a young attorney in Kansas who had been very actively helping me, one of the three or four main members of an unpaid team in the McGovern effort, he gave me—he suggested—he said, “I’m going to give you a list of 125 or 150 people. You ought to call every one of them and ask for their advice. Tell them you’re thinking about running.” That was wonderful advice. That was some of the best advice I had at that early time.

I obviously talked to a lot of people, got a lot of support, some in Washington, some in . . . but anyway, that was one of the best advice I got, well before I announced or it was—just calling all these people and asking them what they thought. And it was interesting. They were surprised. No one was against it. No one just absolutely—some, you caught them off guard, and then you certainly, later, after you made the decision, they had the feeling they were part of it. So it was wonderful advice. I think I’ve passed that on a few times when people have talked to me.

WASNIEWSKI: Were there any moments in that campaign that you felt were turning point moments or pivotal moments?

KEYS: No. You know, I’m optimistic by nature. I just kept working extremely hard—hard back here. It was wonderful when the Women’s Campaign Fund supported me in the primary—both Millicent [Hammond] Fenwick and me because they were bipartisan, and she was certainly a very good candidate. She wouldn’t fit in with the Republicans we have now at all. {laughter} She was a really, really terrific, terrific gal.

But there were things like that because you don't get much support in a primary from groups. And I had individuals who were very generous in their support, and that was a big boost. First that they—because that was the first year it started. And I don't remember.

Of course, labor was terrific because I had always been—once, when I was running, I was asked—they had my Republican opponent and I at different times to all the service clubs. And everyone noted I was always asked a lot harder questions. Anyway, I was asked if I supported the repeal 14(b).² I said, "Absolutely. I think people who work, if they have the benefit of the union's help in getting them decent wages and all, they should pay their dues." I think that certainly endeared labor to me from the very beginning. No one else was asked that question. But they were terrific to me. We didn't have a lot of labor, but they were wonderful.

JOHNSON: So you had mentioned that in the primary there were four opponents that were male and then the general election you also ran against another man.

KEYS: Yes.

JOHNSON: How important was gender in that first campaign for you?

KEYS: Well, I've never considered gender a big obstacle at all. I don't think it was for me. It helped me stand out from these four individuals. I also was a little older, knew a little bit more like life. So I didn't feel it hurt me in any way. And in the general election the young Republican [John C. Peterson] I won against—ran against—was by far my best opponent. In fact, he was a young state legislator. He'd been judged one of the 50 best state legislators of the country, and he was very good. He later changed and became a Democrat. It was a very clean campaign. We appeared together umpteen times on television and other locations. So it was very open. We appeared together

before groups many times, and nobody threw negative things at each other. There was none of that. And I think one of his problems was that he just hadn't quite had enough of life and the realities of life to do as well in answering questions.

WASNIEWSKI: Can you describe the district for us a little bit? It was a Republican-leaning district, but we're interested, just kind of demographically and physically, what was the district when you served in it?

KEYS: It was Republican not Democrat. And, again, if I had been in the district that had Lawrence, that would have helped a lot. Unfortunately, my 15 counties did not have Lawrence. But Bill Roy, before me, when he won it, it was the first time that district had had a Democrat, I think, in something like 100 years. So, you know, it was a district that had been won by a very good Democrat, and then, of course, he chose to run for the Senate. So I had—maybe that gave me a little better chance. And the big thing of it was that it was post-[Richard Milhous] Nixon. That was why a lot of us from those marginal districts got in. And quite a lot of us went out about four years later.

The Paul Weyrich Committee for Survival of a Free Congress did the same routine on about four or five of us in marginal districts. The same lousy campaign of negatives marketed—and these were all districts, of course, that weren't in urban areas. They didn't have a single press. Lot of counties, you know, more rural areas.

JOHNSON: And this was in the 1970s, so it still was unusual for women to be running for Congress. It wasn't typical. So how involved did your family get in the campaign?

KEYS: Well, they were all supportive, and although we were very careful in going around the state not to ever have it all be women, whoever was in the car

with me and things like that I wasn't campaigning just because I was a woman. That didn't even come up. In fact, you knew that would not be a successful thing at that time.

But they were all supportive. It was my son—now the architect—who had gone to school for a year and a half, who had decided he wanted to get out and go to Europe for a while, which he did. He had come back, and he hadn't gone back to school yet because he had just gotten back. And he stayed out of school that semester and drove me everywhere, which was wonderful because I didn't have to be concerned about a thing. He would know where we had to be, and he would get me off in time. Probably the only one I ever had that could do that.

But they were all supportive. They all helped in different ways. Again, my husband didn't go out with me too often. He did sometimes, but not very often. Never out much around the district. Of course, he was busy in his own life. He was dean of education at the K[ansas] State [University].

WASNIEWSKI: Objects?

JOHNSON: Objects, sure.

WASNIEWSKI: We just have a few questions about some—we brought a campaign button, I believe. {laughter} We'd just like to get your thoughts on this.

KEYS: Oh, how about that?

WASNIEWSKI: So this is actually a button that's in the House Collection.

KEYS: Is it?

WASNIEWSKI: Yes. And we're just curious to know—we've been asking everyone about campaign memorabilia, whether it's a button or a bumper sticker. Is there a particular story that you remember behind it?

KEYS: No. I had an excellent media consultant. In fact, I think it's the same one that Gary had. They did come from Colorado, but they had been—it seemed to be—but anyway, they were the one that really helped choose the colors and all these kind of things. Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you make any of those decisions? Even in your second term or was it something that you weren't involved in, with campaign materials?

KEYS: Well, you're involved in them anyway because there's some—they talk to you, get guidance. But I didn't make any—I did the last time, probably to my detriment. {laughter} If I had been smart enough to use the same group because they had been very good with that visual kind of . . . maybe things might have turned out differently. But I somehow doubt it. {laughter}

JOHNSON: When you were elected, you were one of 18 women, only 18 women that were serving in the House.

KEYS: Eleven.

JOHNSON: Okay, was it 11 at that time?

KEYS: I thought there were only 11.

JOHNSON: I can check the numbers afterwards. But it was a really, really small group of women because it was such a—³

KEYS: And the largest ever.

JOHNSON: And because it was such a small group, based on the total population, did you find that women Members tended to gravitate towards each other?

KEYS: Toward what?

JOHNSON: Towards each other. Did you spend a lot of time together because the numbers were so small?

KEYS: No. We were unable to start a women's caucus the first term I was there, to my shock. We met, they wouldn't agree to it. There weren't very many Republicans. They were mostly Democrats. But I think the chasm was a little too wide between Leonor [Kretzer] Sullivan, who was the very old conservative Democrat, dean of the Democratic women, and Bella [Savitzky] Abzug. I think that chasm was a little bit too wide. And they wouldn't agree to it. The second term we finally got it started.

But, no, because I was on Ways and Means—we worked all the time. I was the only woman on Ways and Means. So I did not consult with other women much. I consulted most—I mean, the friendships you develop during the wonderful week we spent at Harvard came to be people you depended upon in other committees. You got to know them well enough. You knew their job—they were very—when you'd ask about something that had just come up on the floor that you—an amendment that you had to vote on, you knew you could ask them. They'd give you the pros, they'd give you the cons, they'd tell you how they were going to vote, and that was it. So they were people you could count on for information when something came up quickly.

JOHNSON: Was there anyone in particular, any woman in particular that you became close to or that might have advised you a little bit more than others? One of the women Members when you first came in?

KEYS: Women Members. You know, interestingly enough, I don't know that that's so. You remember, I was good friends with certainly a whole lot of them, but none of them were on Ways and Means or had any experience with that jurisdiction. And that's what I was quite consumed with, was trying to learn that jurisdiction. That's why I sat through hearings, which a lot of other Members, older Members that had been around much, wouldn't spend much time there. But to me, it was a way of learning, which I felt I needed. So I sat through more of them than many others.

WASNIEWSKI: Were there any men who acted as mentors or who acted in that capacity?

KEYS: Oh, absolutely. Certainly—oh, God. Oh, the wonderful dean of the Missouri [delegation]—[Richard Walker] Bolling. Bolling was certainly a mentor and wonderful friend. I think I really valued his advice and counted on it a great deal—when I asked him things about it. Worked hard when he ran for Majority Leader, and I was so disappointed that he didn't get that.

JOHNSON: How would you describe the atmosphere of the House when you were first elected, especially for women?

KEYS: For women? Yes.

JOHNSON: Was it welcoming?

KEYS: Well, again, I didn't feel sexism particularly. Sure, some of the old Southern guys might call you 'Dear' or something. I ignored that. I knew people that said, "I wouldn't put up with that." To me, that had no meaning. What was meaningful was the conversation that you had with them.

Again, I had never felt a great deal of inequity. I had to learn in reality. I had to get into Congress and learn the statistics to understand the tremendous

inequity that women had in the law. I had never felt it in my home. I certainly was never taught that growing up. I was always taught that I was smart and capable of making my own decisions. That was what my father really insisted on me. So I didn't feel that greatly. And I didn't feel it in Congress. Of course, part of it, once you get on Ways and Means, that kind of—no one feels sorry for you, and they can't look down on you too much either.

WASNIEWSKI: Of course, you were part of that great Democratic class, big Democratic class of '74.

KEYS: Oh, you bet.

WASNIEWSKI: The Watergate Babies.⁴ As you got to know those folks, what was your evaluation of that class?

KEYS: Oh, I think they were—I think—of course, that was such a wonderful time. I mean, people still respected government and Congress, not the White House too much, given what happened. And it was a time when you felt all things were possible. Everyone felt very good about the things that we achieved, the congressional reforms and all that were achieved during our efforts in that class. And I've forgotten exactly the tone of what you asked me about.

WASNIEWSKI: Just your observations about that class now in retrospect.

KEYS: Oh, yes. I thought there were—it really made me angry afterwards when somebody tried to blame that class for some of the things that happened afterwards. I thought that was [expletive]. Frankly, it was the expansion of media that made what happened afterwards, everyone's ability to get a platform if they wanted to kind of push it out. That didn't have anything to do with that class.

I thought it was a terrific class with wonderful people who—well, there were an awful lot of the new Members that came from being actively involved, of course, in the McGovern campaign. And people who really wanted to achieve something, wanted to do something. They weren't, they weren't egotists. And I thought it was a good class full of a lot of leadership types. And, of course, some of them have remained and done wonderful work for years.

JOHNSON: Did you feel as if the women that were in that class, because there were a handful of you, were you encouraged to become leaders, if that's what you wanted to do, within Congress?

KEYS: That, of course, is a little bit harder because the seniority system was still extremely active in terms of leadership positions. So that hadn't started to break down much when I was there. A little bit after me. Certainly when [Richard Andrew] Gephardt [became Democratic Leader] that was a real break. But no, I wouldn't say that there was a lot of encouragement for women to assume leadership positions.

JOHNSON: You mentioned earlier Millicent Fenwick, and she came in with you in that same class. Did you develop a bond, a close bond with any of the other women in that period, too, in that class? I'm trying to think of some of the names: Marilyn [Laird] Lloyd, Helen [Stevenson] Meyner.

KEYS: Yes, Helen Meyner. I liked Helen Meyner a lot and thought a lot of her. I didn't see her often because of our committee work and where our offices were. But every now and then, we'd be walking across to vote together if it happened to be nice, and you were walking outside. But I certainly thought a lot of her. Of course, Gladys [Noon] Spellman, with the short time she was there. She was terrific. Of course, [Barbara Ann] Mikulski came in in '76. I remember when Barbara came in. She was obviously terrific.

But I keep trying to think back. I didn't have close relations with them because of the fact that Ways and Means worked all the time. Both [Gerald Rudolph] Ford [Jr.] and [James Earl "Jimmy"] Carter [Jr.], all of their initiatives, I mean the majority of their initiatives, were in Ways and Means. So it was a real workaholic assignment, which I loved.

JOHNSON: We definitely have a lot of questions we're going to ask you about Ways and Means but just few others before that.

WASNIEWSKI: Sure. Yes. Did you feel—well, there had been so few women elected from Kansas—Kathryn [Ellen] O'Loughlin McCarthy. Am I getting that right? O'Loughlin McCarthy, in the early '30s, she served a term. Did you feel like you were—once you were in Washington, that you were getting extra scrutiny because you were the only woman from Kansas?

KEYS: From? Only one what?

WASNIEWSKI: The only one representing Kansas. Did you feel like you were getting more scrutiny because of gender?

KEYS: Well, most of my Kansas Republican colleagues just chose to ignore me. They were very happy to ignore me, which is fine with me. But, yes, you get noticed because you're a woman. For goodness sake, it's an advantage. You're much more visible than the males around. So you get noted. People speak to you. But no, I didn't feel—I don't know whether—perhaps that means you are given more scrutiny because you are much more noticeable. But I didn't find it negative. Yes. Didn't bother me or anything.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned—alluded to the leader to the delegation. How did the delegation work at that point—the Kansas delegation?

KEYS: It didn't work. We never had a meeting. The only time they ever entrusted anything to me was because it was something I was involved in they didn't like. The Green Amendment, which was one of the first things that a number of us worked on because it was a way to get more money for some oil, and obviously, well, the governor and all were horrified that I was active in that Green [Amendment]. So that's about the only time that anyone ever said anything to me, to be very truthful. They really just tried to ignore me. But it didn't . . . I was too busy with the work. It didn't bother me at all.

JOHNSON: Some of the women that we've talked to, especially from the 1970s and the 1980s, talked about how there were parts of the Capitol that were off-limits to women.

KEYS: Well, {laughter} certainly the big gym. Our gym was—you couldn't call it a gym. But we did have a masseuse, and she was very good. Very good. You could never—hardly ever got a chance to go up there. Edith [Starrett] Green of Oregon, who left before I was there, had migraines. She said if she could get away the minute she had the first—whether it was a visual thing or the first hint of it—if she could get away and go up to Maria and have her give her a good massage, concentrating on her feet, that she could avoid the migraine. But you hardly ever had time to get up there. But, that's the only part that you wished that women had had some comparable place.

JOHNSON: Did you ever find that that was a bit of a disadvantage that women couldn't go in the gym or couldn't play golf because that's where a lot of the deals were made?

KEYS: Well, yes, because absolutely a lot of fun things and a lot of actual deal making, I'm sure. You certainly couldn't do that.

WASNIEWSKI: And throughout this time, how did you balance kind of like family life? You had four kids who were pretty much grown at that point.

KEYS: Three of them were able to vote for me first time I ran. I just had my youngest son, who was in junior high school.

WASNIEWSKI: Okay. And there were a couple of other ones. Pat Schroeder had young children at that point.

KEYS: Yes. She was the only one. See, I didn't have young children. And I always thought that's really something to have young children. I think that would be very difficult. I didn't, and my young son, who was in junior high school, is always totally strong, steady, self-sufficient. And, of course, he was back with his father [in Kansas]. And then at the end of junior high, he had his choice of living where he wanted. He wanted to come to Washington and did. He went through high school.

WASNIEWSKI: So was he active at all in your office? Did he come to the office a lot?

KEYS: Well, he came in a lot. They all knew him. And he came in. He enjoyed coming in. He didn't have a lot of time. He was very active—singing groups in school. Played the lead in a musical they did, the first musical they had done once. The staff got to see it before I did, or several of them had gone, because I had been back in Kansas or something. When I came back, they told me, they said, "Wow." They said, "We couldn't believe that was Scott," because Scott was always very self-contained, mature kind of guy. And he played this—*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*—he plays the role of Presley-like figure, has this white suit on, and he strolled. He goes down the aisle singing, kicking up his heels and stuff, along with things onstage. So they could not believe that was Scott. {laughter} But it was a lot of fun. But he enjoyed that. He was always a top-grade student, but he

enjoyed his work there in the choirs, in the madrigal singers, and all. I think he probably got more confidence and maturation out of that than anything else in high school.

JOHNSON: I can imagine. Were there a lot of other Members that had their families in D.C. as well, that you got to know and maybe you got to socialize with?

KEYS: Well, all of my family was here. I mean, all lived with me at some time for a short period of time. My oldest daughter came with me when I was elected, and we lived in an apartment together for a while. And then she always stayed here. But both the architect son—he was here. He did a six-month thing at the architectural society, a six-month whatever you call it.

JOHNSON: An internship?

KEYS: Yes. And my younger daughter was here, lived here for a year-and-a-half or so with us, and then, of course, Scott chose to come here. So they were all here at one time or another, but they were never all here at the same time, except if they came to visit or something. But the older ones, of course, were very much on their own. They were in college, two of them. But I was back there all the time. Every week and three weekends out of four.

WASNIEWSKI: Move on to the Women's Caucus? So we're curious to know, because you were one of the founding members, what are your memories of the Congressional Women's Caucus, the founding of it, the first meetings?

KEYS: Well, as I say, we weren't able to have it until '77. But after that it was good. The one thing we—the first thing that everyone joined in and worked on was getting women into the academies. That was the first big issue that everyone agreed to. A great many of the Members, but not every one of them, not all the Republicans, but the majority of the Members also voted to work very

hard on the Title IX regulations, and we knocked ourselves out over that, those of us who worked. There were a few, I don't even—to be very honest, I don't even remember. But I know all of the Republicans were not supportive of it. But that was quite a hard fight.

WASNIEWSKI: Do you have any memories at all of the inaugural meeting that happened?

KEYS: Of what?

WASNIEWSKI: Of the inaugural meeting of the group? The first meeting? Happened in April of '77.

KEYS: Only that we did set a meeting for people to get together again, and then we had the vote, "Can we start a women's caucus?" And they voted "yes." That was a miracle after going through the year before and not being able to get a majority vote to proceed with the Women's Caucus. So that was quite miraculous, it seemed. {laughter}

JOHNSON: What were your impressions of the first two co-chairs? [Elizabeth] Liz Holtzman and Margaret [M.] Heckler were the original co-chairs.

KEYS: Absolutely. Oh. Well, they were good. Liz Holtzman, of course, was just terrific. They were great. Peggy Heckler, of course, she was fine. She later became chairman of HEW [the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] or secretary of HEW.

JOHNSON: One thing I was wondering, too, before there was that formal organization in your first term, did women Members that wanted to organize or get together, did you have any sort of meetings?

KEYS: Not really. Because you worked with people in your own—either people who were on your committee, and, of course, there was no one on my committee,

or maybe you had—if their office was near yours or something, so that you happened to go over together all the time. That’s the way a lot of friendships—of course, Ways and Means was in Longworth [House Office Building], where my office was, and we literally met all the time. But if you happened to walk over with other women when you were walking over to vote, that’s one thing. I didn’t have any close around me. And I really didn’t have any real close relationships with other women. I often talked to some of them to ask about things on their committee, although I had staff covering other committees, of course.

WASNIEWSKI: How did you find the response to the creation of the caucus? What did all your male colleagues think about the caucus, and did they take it seriously?

KEYS: I never heard anything much about it because, first of all, it wasn’t—it didn’t make itself extremely well-known by doing a lot of publicity about the Women’s Caucus or anything. It was just something we got together and all agreed to work on and to meet regularly and to work on together. And agreed that we would only take on things that would receive a majority vote. And I didn’t—there were other caucuses. You know, there were a lot of caucuses by then. Not as many as there may be now. But I never had any particular inquiries about it.

WASNIEWSKI: And the Congressional Black Caucus had been around for six years prior to that.

KEYS: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: The 1970s was an important decade for women’s reproductive rights.

KEYS: Beg your pardon?

JOHNSON:

For women's reproductive rights, the pro-choice/pro-life debate. How important was that for women Members and then also the caucus? How much did that impact you while you were in the House?

KEYS:

That wasn't anything we could take up because of the diverse opinions of it. It was not subject to the Women's Caucus. It's hard to believe, but it's so. Remember, that's when Henry [John] Hyde managed to thwart everything for all of us who were solidly, obviously pro-choice and pro-choice for everyone and all the kind of things that went with it.⁵ To me, the problem for a woman was learning how to try to discuss it without totally alienating the people who were just totally against it all the time. Certainly not all Catholics.

I stayed with nuns half the time when I was going up to the northern part of my district. The nuns in Atchison [Kansas] were wonderful. One of the nuns [Sister Bernadette Marie Teasdale] was the sister of—oh, what was his name? The guy who had been governor of Missouri, a Democratic governor back a few years [Joseph Patrick Teasdale]. But anyway, those nuns were all marvelous to me. They certainly didn't like the fact that I was pro-abortion and stuff, but if you—which, of course, is not a good way to even state it. You're pro-choice, but the point of it is that abortion should be totally legal.

So I did talk to a very wise Catholic political scientist from KU [Kansas University] who was very active in politics and who . . . I talked with him a long time before I started really campaigning, and he helped me try to figure out how to talk about it to avoid things that were traps and to make the position very clear but not to unnecessarily alienate. Because it was a difficult position. Many Catholic areas in my district, many counties that were virtually all Catholic. But for the most part I often had their support anyway—certainly Catholics aren't all one-issue people, few are.

Every Sunday before Election Day the abbot would send a letter to every priest asking them to preach against voting for me. We had a policy. Both times we had all kinds of volunteers, and we circulated after—not the first time, obviously, but for the re-election campaigns. I always was 100 percent on the sister's network because they didn't have abortion on it. And I was in the 90s on the bishop's network, which, of course did have that. But I was good on all of their other issues. So we would just circulate—they'd put these flyers on the windshields of cars in the parking lot. But anyway, just one of the things, one of the ways that the church as other churches, too, often totally violate the law that gives them special tax consideration.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned Henry Hyde and the Hyde Amendment. So that passes in 1976. Did that legislation surprise you and the other women Members at the time?

KEYS: Oh, no. Oh, no. It certainly didn't surprise me because I knew people like that. It got to where they learned not to bring it up as an overall issue in my district. It was always done in the selected counties. It was always pushed hard in certain selected counties in the time that I was defeated. They got smart about that, I guess.

WASNIEWSKI: At the time did you and other Members realize the long-lasting impact and influence that the Hyde Amendment would have?

KEYS: Probably not. It was just one of those horrible things that we couldn't seem to overcome.

JOHNSON: I just had one last question about the caucus, the Women's Caucus. I know you said that there wasn't a lot of publicity at the time, that it seemed like it was more behind the scenes. But given what you've seen, the work the caucus

has done over the years, how important do you think it has been to the institution?

KEYS: Oh, I'm sure it's much more important now. Just look at—I'd think it'd be very important. But there weren't—with the number of women—I can't believe that there were 18 women in that.

JOHNSON: This was the 94th Congress. It's the top one here.

KEYS: I don't know why I thought there were 11.

WASNIEWSKI: That doesn't include Senators. There wasn't a woman Senator. That's right. That's right.

KEYS: No, there weren't any until Muriel [Buck] Humphrey.

WASNIEWSKI: Right.

JOHNSON: But 18 out of the total 435. That's a really small number.

KEYS: No, I know. Oh, I know. It's pathetic.

WASNIEWSKI: And Shirley [Neil] Pettis came in late. So there were 17 to start. And she was elected late.

KEYS: Of course. They were all there. Isn't that funny? I wonder where I got that 11.

JOHNSON: Eleven, 18, it's a handful.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes. It's the treachery of memory sometimes.

KEYS: Yes. I think I—somehow that's kind of stuck in my mind. I'm sure I've said it just to friends who asked me something about it.

JOHNSON: But even with that small number of women, how important do you think it was to have an organization, a group that was dedicated to women Members?

KEYS: Well, first of all, it showed that we could work together across lines. That was one of the first things it showed. And, as I say, the women really, the one thing that everyone really worked on was getting women into the academies, which we achieved. And that was probably the first big success we had.

WASNIEWSKI: Another big push, as well, was extending the deadline for the Equal Rights Amendment.

KEYS: Oh, yeah.

WASNIEWSKI: And do you have any memories of the decision to do that as a caucus or how that was carried out?

KEYS: I don't have a lot of memories of it. Was it actually in legislative form at that time?

JOHNSON: For the extension, Liz Holtzman had pushed for that for a vote for the seven-year extension. And so the vote was in 1977.

KEYS: Isn't it funny? I don't remember. I'm sure we worked on it. That's something everyone would have been supportive of, I would think. I don't know. I just don't have much memory of it.

JOHNSON: That's fine.

WASNIEWSKI: That's no problem.

JOHNSON: How important was it for you as a Member to have the ERA [Equal Rights] Amendment? How important do you think that that was for women? How necessary do you think it was?

KEYS: I can't answer that question. I'm sure it was necessary. It seems such an obvious thing to me. When did it occur? Do you remember the month or anything?

JOHNSON: I know it was 1977. I don't have the month, but I can certainly let you know.

KEYS: Yes, yes.

JOHNSON: And we interviewed Liz Holtzman, so we had done a lot of background research, and she had told us about that, and she said that the caucus was involved.

KEYS: Right. Well, she would because she certainly was the person that was the champion and the one always that sat at the House table when anything like that was up. She was excellent.

WASNIEWSKI: She had a memory about women in the caucus developing essentially a whip organization and people were assigned to go talk to x-number of their colleagues.

KEYS: Isn't that funny? I just don't have a memory of it. I don't know what we were working on that I would have been involved, and I would have certainly done the work I was supposed to. I don't know. It's just not something that I have a great memory of.

WASNIEWSKI: That's not a problem.

JOHNSON: That's fine. Do you want to move ahead to committee service?

WASNIEWSKI: Sure. Absolutely. Go ahead.

JOHNSON: All right. Are you okay to keep going or did you want to take a break?

KEYS: Oh, I'm fine. Yes.

JOHNSON: Okay. I know you've mentioned Ways and Means and we do have a lot of questions we wanted to ask you about that. The first thing was how were you able to get an assignment as a freshman on such an influential committee?

KEYS: Well, I tell you, two people helped me with this and that's Don and—oh, from Minnesota—Don [Donald MacKay Fraser] and Arvonne Fraser. Because I had met, I knew them a bit. And he had tried to get on Ways and Means and was unable to. And he and Arvonne were talking to me one time and asked me what committee I'd like to be on, and I said, "Well, of course, I'd like to be on Ways and Means." And he said, "You should, here's what you should do. Let's develop a letter that you send to every member of the Democratic Caucus." And I did, with about four reasons. One of the big ones, obviously, was there certainly needed to be a woman and Martha [Wright] Griffiths had retired. The second was that no state even touching Kansas had had anyone on the Ways and Means Committee for I forget how many [years]—a long time, 30 or 40 years. Forty at least years. Anyway, several things.

So I developed a letter. Again, they encouraged me to, and I wrote the letter, but they advised and helped with it. Of course, I had Bill Roy's staff, whom I kept on, all who wanted to stay provisionally for three months, and then I said we'd reassess. So anyway I did that—sent a letter. I went in.

Of course—and, again, I'll tell you the person most responsible for me getting on Way and Means and that's Dick Bolling. Obviously Carl [Bert] Albert—anyway, I went in to see Carl Albert. It happened that [Joseph Lyman] Joe Fisher and I went in together. He just happened to make an appointment for both of us to come in. And we went in and sat and talked

with him quite a long time, and we were the two that got on Ways and Means.

But I did make a real effort for it—kind of waged another campaign for it. Don and Arvonne Fraser, who encouraged me to do that, really gave me the idea of writing the letter and sending it to every member of the Democratic Caucus.

WASNIEWSKI: What were your impressions of Carl Albert?

KEYS: Well, he was a very nice man. I certainly was grateful to him for getting me on that committee. But he didn't seem terribly effective to me compared to, of course, [Thomas Philip] Tip O'Neill [Jr.] who came in later. But he was very nice. He once came and asked me for a vote on something, and I did not do it, which I thought afterwards was pretty crummy, I guess. It was something that—I don't even remember, but it was important at the time to me. I can't remember exactly what it was.

JOHNSON: Martha Griffiths, as you said, was the first woman to serve on Ways and Means.

KEYS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you ever have the—I know she was retired—but did you have the chance to meet her?

KEYS: Yes, I did, because she just left at that time. And I met her but it was well before. I never talked to her. I don't think she was around when I was making the effort.

JOHNSON: Okay, so she didn't have a chance to offer any advice as the first woman [on Ways and Means]?

KEYS: No.

JOHNSON: You were the second woman on the committee historically and the only woman serving at that time. What was the reception like for you as the only woman on the committee?

KEYS: Well, {laughter} I mean, it was fine. I noticed in your questions you were wanting to ask my impressions of [Albert Conrad] Al Ullman. Al Ullman, whom I liked very much as a person and agreed with on much more issues, was not a good chairman really because he allowed the senior Members to just dominate all the time. Whereas [Daniel David] Rostenkowski—you also asked for—he was my chair on the Health Subcommittee. Rostenkowski, whom I didn't agree with as much, was an excellent chairman. He absolutely did not let people run away with time. He made sure everyone had a chance to be involved. And he was that way the four years that he was my chair on the Health Subcommittee. I never served with him when he was chair of [the full committee]—but it was quite a difference between that. So you had a hard time getting a chance to speak much on Ways and Means when Al Ullman was chair as a very junior member. And, of course, greatly enlarged committee—quite a change for him.

JOHNSON: Did you feel like you ever had to work harder to prove yourself because you were the only woman on the committee, and you were a freshman?

KEYS: I only felt that I had to work harder because of me, because I felt I had so much to learn and catch up with in terms of this, totality of all the issues. So I didn't ever feel pressure from others but I always pressured myself.

WASNIEWSKI: And like the question we asked about your coming to the House, was there anyone on the committee who served as a mentor or who offered you very useful advice when you first came to the committee?

KEYS: Oh, gosh. Memory.

WASNIEWSKI: We have a committee roster.

KEYS: Oh, no, no. I have that. I'm just trying to think of the name of my seatmate. Good friend. Illinois. I know him so well.

WASNIEWSKI: Abner [Joseph] Mikva.

KEYS: Yes. Ab was my seatmate and he was a great—helped me. He on one side and—I just couldn't pull up the name. I could see his face. He on one side and Joe Fisher on the other. And we had lots of—but in terms of more senior Members, it's interesting. I wouldn't particularly think of any of them as a mentor. There were a lot of Members that they were not mentors in any way, senior Members that were up there.

I knew [Charles B.] Charlie Rangel fairly well. He was always good to work with. But actually, the real one that helped you a great deal was the lead staffer. I cannot remember his name. He, and Wilbur [Daigh] Mills, I'm sure, knew as much about the code as any two people. And Wilbur, when he came back after his year in alcoholic treatment, when he came back he was very careful to stay totally out—but he was wonderful and being more than anxious to answer any questions or work with any of the number of newcomers to that committee. So he was very, very helpful in that way. And very nice always.

WASNIEWSKI: A wealth of knowledge.

KEYS: Yes.

WASNIEWSKI: It must have been an interesting time on that committee with him having just gone off and with the reforms and a real period of flux for the committee.

KEYS: Yes. That's the thing. He came back. He stayed. He carried out his voting in all the time, but he stayed quietly—he was very careful not to try to usurp any attention and didn't come in at all until the second year.

JOHNSON: Did you learn any important lessons in your committee service that might have helped you as a Representative?

KEYS: I'm not very succinct in verbalizing things like that. I'm sure there were lots of them but . . .

JOHNSON: That's fine.

KEYS: Be prepared. Always be prepared.

WASNIEWSKI: We've touched on a few points about the fact that this was a period of reform in the House and change in the House. We'd just like to get your general impressions about the push for those reforms, from opening committees up to junior Members to moving senior chairs to the side. {laughter} What long-term effects do you think that had on the institution?

KEYS: Oh, I think it had a tremendous effect. And you have to understand that wonderful reformers who had tried to reform the House, Dick Bolling being a big one, and others before, helped a lot in pushing the new—people in the new class who were really . . . the idea of calling, making all the chairmen come in and speak to the class and all of this. And then we did get rid of three of them. Not Wayne [Levere] Hays, unfortunately, but I tried.
{laughter}

But it was an interesting time. I think that was terribly important because there were all these southern chairs to all these big committees that had just been there forever and were not in tune with the times at all. The thing that was really interesting to me, after having voted against it, [John William Wright Patman] came . . . the first time I spoke on the House Floor I was going to speak on some amendment. He came up and sat by me, and he said—he was very nice—he said, “I just want to sit with you here,” he said. “I think you’re going to be great.” He said, “I want you to stay here long enough to be chairman.” I, of course, had voted him off. He was just too old. He was a wonderful man, wonderful man, but he’d been there too long, and he was a little bit out of it.

But I think those [reforms] were terribly important—having an open vote for Speaker. Those things were never before. Before it was always just either a show of hands or everybody stood or something. Making them cast a vote, things like this. I think those were all really important in terms of the House itself and how it developed leadership and pursued the work of the House.

JOHNSON:

The size of the Ways and Means Committee, as you had mentioned, too, increased. Did you think that was a good thing having that number of Members on the committee?

KEYS:

I think so. Yes, I thought it was terrific. Because we have such a huge country with such a variety of interests in terms of economies, of whatever the energy source is, all different kinds of things, that it seems to me there needed to be more states represented on that.

I was interested in looking back—thinking about Jeannette Rankin made me look back to see how many states had suffrage well before. And it was amazing. All western, almost, not quite, there were a couple, but it was the

western states. Even Kansas got it in 1912. Now, I knew they had been early, but it's just interesting. Which is very typical of the newly—that's why I was so . . . One of the reasons that I supported my brother-in-law [Gary Hart] when he ran for President so much was because we needed to get away from that old industrial East. We needed to get to the West and show a little bit more leadership from the whole country. I thought that was really important. Plus, his knowledge on defense since Democrats were always supposed to be so weak on defense strategies.

JOHNSON: Right.

WASNIEWSKI: We're at 12:25 so I just want to make sure that we leave you time to—what time do you need to wrap-up by?

KEYS: Well, I need to get someplace by 1:00 but it's just someplace out here.

WASNIEWSKI: Okay. So what time would you like us to stop? Quarter of 1:00 or earlier?

KEYS: Yes, definitely.

WASNIEWSKI: Okay.

KEYS: Sorry.

WASNIEWSKI: No, that's fine.

KEYS: I talk too long. Yes.

JOHNSON: No, no.

WASNIEWSKI: No, this is great. This is great.

KEYS: So get in anything you really want to get in.

WASNIEWSKI: Okay.

JOHNSON: All right.

WASNIEWSKI: Go ahead.

JOHNSON: All the women we've talked to in some regards have made history because, as we talked about, there weren't many women serving in Congress. So one thing that stood out was that you married another Member of Congress.

KEYS: Oh. Oh, yes. That was history.

JOHNSON: A historic first. So what was the reaction of your fellow Members when the news broke?

KEYS: Oh, they thought it was great. They always thought it was great. They had a party for us, gave us gifts. But fellow Members thought it was great.

JOHNSON: What about your constituents? We did a little bit of research on that, and we saw that there were some concerns some Members voiced.

KEYS: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

JOHNSON: What was your reaction to that?

KEYS: Well, mixed reactions. You know, women, interestingly enough, often treat you worse than men in a campaign. I once remember shaking hands at the rubber workers' union as they were coming out of work or something. I was there shaking hands. This was for my election, second time, I guess, because that was after [Andrew] Andy [Jacobs, Jr.] and I were married. And this woman practically spit at me, and she said, "And you didn't even take your husband's name." {laughter} I mean, that kind of thing. So you have all these feelings. After all, I was re-elected that time [in 1976], in spite of [Robert

Joseph Dole being on the ticket [for Vice President] and their being sure that I was gone.

JOHNSON: What were some of the other challenges that you might have faced with being married to another Member?

KEYS: Well, there was no—people always thought how impossible it would be. Of course, there was nothing—that was the easiest thing in the world. We both understood our responsibilities to our work in Washington and to our district, and there was never any disharmony about anything. You had to do what you had to do. I didn't go spend much time in Indiana, but I came through there on my way home. There's only one direct flight that Braniff flew, and it very seldom flew at a time that I could take it. So I would always have to stop in either Indianapolis or St. Louis. So I often stopped, maybe for a few hours or something like that. But I didn't go there much obviously.

We were very careful when we were married, that we made clear—we kept our finances and everything separate, and we had it registered in both states. We would each keep our own names, that kind of stuff. So a lot was trying to be done to alleviate. But you still had a lot. And, of course, there were Members that thought it was terrible that both of us were on Ways and Means. A lot of Members that thought that was really terrible.

JOHNSON: Are those Members on the committee who thought that?

KEYS: Oh, no, I don't think so. In fact, Barber [Benjamin] Conable [Jr.], who was a very good friend of mine, really wanted me to run again, after I was defeated by the worst person in the world {laughter} that I ever ran against. He was just unfit, you know. So no, I never—not on the committee that was expressed to me, but perhaps. But it was silly. We didn't vote alike on all kinds of things.

WASNIEWSKI: Did you find that there were any double standards at play when you had to go out and campaign and people might raise the issue of you being divorced? But Andy Jacobs had been divorced, too, and we came across some articles and he said, “I never get asked these questions.” How did you deal with that?

KEYS: I didn’t. I don’t remember having a lot of questions about that. But, of course, you would be amazed at some of the things that the little local papers—the little papers in the counties that were just weekly papers, the things that they would write. It was a lot about who whispers in her ear at night, and who makes her vote? And then when Andy would not vote like me on something, usually an agricultural issue or something. “Well, if she can’t even control her own bedroom, what good is she?” I mean, stuff like that. It’s unbelievable. But that’s the crappy level of that kind of weekly paper out in rural counties.

JOHNSON: How about your women colleagues at the time? Did they offer support or maybe just—because we’ve certainly heard some of the women say that they would talk about their family life or things that maybe they had to deal with. Did you find that, as well?

KEYS: No, I didn’t have any—I never felt any objections or anything from women.

JOHNSON: What about support?

KEYS: I never felt I lacked support. As I say, it wasn’t a close group that worked together all the time, particularly because of committee differences and schedules.

JOHNSON: Okay. I definitely want to make sure we ask a couple Title IX questions.

WASNIEWSKI: Go ahead. Yes.

JOHNSON: So Title IX was passed before you came into Congress, but when you were there, there were still issues that needed to be settled.

KEYS: Oh, the big, big thing was approval of the regs. And that was such a huge fight. This was a very emotional and dramatic ending. Patsy [Takemoto] Mink was chairing it because of her committee. And the votes were being cast. She was called out because her daughter had been in an accident, was at the brink of death. And she had to leave before casting her vote. It failed by one vote. And someone who had voted against it, some decent Republican or whoever it was who had voted against it, or maybe someone voted against it purposely, so they could ask for the vote to be taken again. So it was taken again later. She was back, and it passed by two or three votes. But that was such a dramatic—because we had worked terribly hard on that.⁶ We had every coach that you saw all the time on television roaming the halls. It was quite a big effort to get that through and quite a dramatic occasion because of the tragedy of Patsy's daughter's accident.

JOHNSON: What do you think the lasting legacy of Title IX will be?

KEYS: Oh, my God, we see it. {laughter} It is there. I mean, gee, we have in Washington, some of the women's teams in some of the sports draw much bigger crowds than the men's. And this certainly comes because at the college level, they have women's sports. They have to invest in women's sports. I think it's just amazing, and I think it shows all over. You don't even have girls today like I was growing up. I mean, gee, I didn't have any interest in anything. I read books and played the piano. {laughter} But you don't have girls that don't do all kinds of sports when they're growing up. It's wonderful.

JOHNSON: I agree.

WASNIEWSKI: Just one general question. You also worked on trying to shore up or correct gender inequalities in social security, how divorced women were given benefits. Just what's your general thought about the role of Congress in addressing gender inequalities?

KEYS: Well, you had to fight for everything you got. On that, you know, we finally raised the—did a lot on some of those social security issues. You know, when I went, this is an interesting thing, I was put on the Greenspan Commission by Tip [O'Neill], and I went to Tip, and I said, "Look, I'm not—I have no interest in making a campaign or an effort to get this, but"—I was out of Congress but I was, you know, still around—and I said, "If you put me on that commission, women's groups will be happy with me, and labor will be happy with me." And I said, "They might not—I might not be their first choice, but they'll be happy with me." I said, "That's it. That's all I'm going to say." And that's all I did. I never said a word to anyone else about it. But he did put me on the committee.

WASNIEWSKI: We have time for just a few wrap-up questions, and one of the ones that we've asked everyone we've interviewed so far is if you look at the House and Senate today, there's 88 women in the House, 20 in the Senate. This is the 100th anniversary of Jeannette Rankin's election. What are the House and Senate going to look like—how many women are going to serve 50 years from now on the 150th anniversary, and how do we get there?

KEYS: Well, I doubt if we'll have an even number, which we should have. But we'll be a lot closer. We certainly ought to have an even number, at least. We'll be a lot closer.

WASNIEWSKI: How do we—{phone ringing and answering machine}

KEYS: Sorry.

WASNIEWSKI: How do we get to that point?

KEYS: Well, it's wonderful to see women running. And right now they think women are equally attractive as candidates. I get that feeling from reading a lot of stuff that there doesn't seem to be a big negative at all or much negative at all left about women. God knows the men have made a mess of it. I'd think they'd want to get anyone that wasn't someone that was there before in fast. {laughter}

JOHNSON: What advice would you offer to a woman who came to you and was thinking about running for Congress?

KEYS: Oh, I'd encourage them. I certainly have a lot. In fact, tomorrow night is the Democratic picnic here of the woman who is the candidate. I'd never even heard of her. I'm not sure whether we've absolutely settled on our district yet. Supposedly, we may get a district that's improved somewhat, because our particular district is very Republican. But I don't think she has a shot at anything. But anyway, I'm certainly going and, we look forward to meeting her and seeing what she is. I've never even heard of her. Never seen her name.

WASNIEWSKI: If you were to offer just a, you know, a nugget or two of practical advice, though, in addition to encouragement, what would that be? What would you tell that person?

KEYS: You've got to get to know—I talked to the last woman. I said, "I don't know if all of the service clubs still have weekly luncheons. Some of them do, I know." But I said, "That's a wonderful way to get around and talk to people. Because you need to talk to not just Democrats. Just going around talking to Democratic groups or things set up by them doesn't hit it. You've got to be talking to a lot more. You need to get out, find ways to talk to people of both parties."

JOHNSON: Was there anything unexpected or anything that surprised you during your time in the House?

KEYS: {laughter} I can't name one thing.

JOHNSON: Does anything come to mind?

KEYS: No.

JOHNSON: No. Okay.

KEYS: Sorry.

JOHNSON: That's fine. And we just had one last question. Do you want to go ahead?

WASNIEWSKI: Yes, that's a good one to end with. Again, one that we've asked almost everyone. What do you think, in looking back on your service now, almost 40 years ago, what do you think your lasting legacy is going to be from your House service?

KEYS: Oh. I don't know. One of the first things I was pleased about, that I worked very hard on in committee, was getting the child deduction changed from a deduction to a credit. Because previously all of those young people who didn't own a house yet had no way of getting it. So I thought that was a—I worked very hard on disability issues because I came from the state of Kansas where the Menningers had done such a wonderful job in the whole state of really working. More than half of our counties had levies for developmentally disabled children. So the state was so far advanced in that area, and I got to know all the Menningers well. So, I worked hard on a lot of those issues. But, yes, I don't know what I will be remembered for, how much I will be remembered. {laughter}

JOHNSON: We've certainly enjoyed reading about your work with Title IX.

KEYS: With what?

JOHNSON: With Title IX, your involvement with Title IX.

KEYS: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: One thing I did want to ask was about Patsy Mink. Did you get the chance to work with her closely?

KEYS: I knew her well, and I'd sit and talk with her sometimes, like Bella, others that I didn't work with her closely on anything because of . . .

JOHNSON: The committees.

KEYS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Right.

KEYS: Just because of the committee structure. They didn't overlap really at all.

JOHNSON: And when you talked about all the coaches that were coming from the big Division I programs when the Title IX vote was up, what do you remember? What was your response? How did you organize for this group that was lobbying you very hard at that time?

KEYS: It was interesting. Well, in terms of the women's caucus. Well, we were all—that was one thing that everybody was totally supportive of, and you just knew how it was going to be. I had a wonderful young intern that was—it happened, went on during the summer off-year, and I had a very wonderful young intern that worked for me. And that was one thing I said, "Great. You be responsible for covering all the hearings and things that go on and other

meetings and hearings that are out and report on me, directly to me.” She did, and she later went to SMU [Southern Methodist University] and won a suit against them for not living up to their responsibility. She was a real sharp young gal. She was from the Manhattan [Kansas] area. Her father was a leader at the [Kansas State] university. I don’t remember exactly what he was. He was dean of something, I think. But it was an interesting thing. But as far as how we worked, really, you just worked in your own area, you worked—we did work together to get some things in the press. But you basically worked your own bailiwick, wherever you were.

JOHNSON: Thank you.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes, thank you very much.

KEYS: Well, it was great to have you.

WASNIEWSKI: We really appreciate it.

KEYS: I don’t know if I said anything that was at all enlightening.

WASNIEWSKI: Oh, that was great.

NOTES

¹Vern Miller served as the Kansas attorney general from 1971 to 1975. He supported the prohibition of alcohol in Kansas, including in the airspace above the state.

² Reference to a provision of the Taft–Hartley Act to prohibit “right to work” laws in states.

³ At the beginning of the 94th Congress (1975–1977), 18 women served in the House. With Shirley Pettis’ special election on April 29, 1975, the number increased to 19 women Representatives.

⁴ Reference to the 75 Democratic freshman Representatives elected to the 94th Congress (1975–1977) in the wake of the Watergate scandal.

⁵ Representative Henry Hyde led the legislative battle in Congress to prohibit federal funding of abortions.

⁶ On July 16, 1975, the House debated an amendment to a House appropriations bill (H.R. 5901), added by Representative Robert Randolph Casey, that would prohibit the application of Title IX to physical education courses in public schools. After Mink had left the Capitol to care for her daughter, the motion passed by a vote of 212 to 211. The following day, the Senate had stricken the amendment from a previous version of the bill in conference, and it subsequently voted 65 to 29 to strike the amendment from the bill and insist on its earlier position. On July 18, Speaker Albert and Representative Daniel John Flood described the circumstances of Mink’s departure to aid her daughter, and Flood offered a motion “to recede and concur in the Senate position.” The vote was in favor of this motion, 216 to 178. This preserved the application of Title IX to physical education in public schools. The entire debate over the amendment can be found in several passages in the *Congressional Record*. *Congressional Record*, House, 94th Cong., 1st sess. (16 July 1975): 23113–23127; *Congressional Record*, Senate, 94th Cong., 1st sess. (17 July 1975): 23330–23343; *Congressional Record*, House, 94th Cong., 1st sess. (18 July 1975): 23504–23510.