

The Honorable Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
U.S. Representative of California (1973–1979)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Help for the House Beauty Shop

Representative Burke discusses her decision to chair the Beauty Shop Committee.
Interview recorded July 22, 2015

First of all, the women at the beauty shop were not treated very well. You know, they were not treated well in terms of salaries, and facility, and everything, and I just became very concerned about them. And they said, "We need someone who is willing to carry our water, to really kind of take up for us." And I know that my staff people said, "You can't take that. Can you imagine going back to your district and saying, 'I chair the Beauty Shop Committee?'" I said, you know, "My feeling is, if they ask me why, I'll say, 'Well, someone has to stand up for women, and someone has to stand up for women who are working over there in the beauty shop, plus all those women who may want to go to the beauty shop. And it's not just us few Congresswomen who are, who use it. It's for all the women, the staff women. They can all use it.'" And I just said, "Of course I'll do it." Now, I mean, I'm sure plenty of people said, "Oh, why would you do that? It's demeaning." It was not demeaning to me. As far as I'm concerned, I was trying to help someone, and I did it. And I think that I did help them.