

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

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

**Debating a Pregnant Member**

Representative Burke remembers Members of Congress trying to find someone with "the nerve" to debate her while she was pregnant.

*Interview recorded July 22, 2015*

I was pregnant at the time, and I had an amendment which was a "Buy America" for steel because I had introduced an amendment to the Alaska Pipeline for affirmative action, which went through without any discussion on the Senate side and the House. But I introduced this "Buy America" to buy all American steel, and it was a great debate between the men. I could tell they were all over on the side trying to figure out who would have the nerve to debate a pregnant woman on the floor of the House. And finally, they found someone who debated the issue, and I can remember, you know, Congressman Dingell saying to me, "You know, this is protectionist, what you're trying to do." So, I was—they didn't pamper me. Don't think they pampered me or just let my legislation go through. In some instances, if it was something people accepted, it went through. If it was something they didn't know what I was doing, it often went through. But in that instance, it was really interesting to me that they said that they had to find someone who would have the nerve to debate a pregnant woman.