

Betsy Wright Hawkings

Chief of Staff, Representative Christopher Shays of Connecticut

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Family and Politics

Betsy Wright Hawkings recalls the political allegiances in her family and how her mother gave her the confidence to be ambitious.

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Yeah, it was, it was definitely something that we thought about in our house. It was principally my dad who openly thought about it. I learned later that my mother thought about it, too. It was just his voice that, that was the, that was the larger voice. He was the head of the Young Republicans and—in our area—and had a lot of, you know, opinions and was always very involved in various campaigns. And, I learned later that my mother also—I mean she—one thing about my mom was that she really taught me in a very subtle way from an early age, you know, that you can sort of do whatever you want and that was, I think, now that I—in retrospect, a function of the fact that she actually had a dad who sort of said, "No, you know, that's not something—I'm not sending you east to college, you know. You're not going, you're not going to do anything but get married after college so why am I going to spend that money? You're going to go to the state school." I mean, this was an actual conversation. And she was very subtle but clear about the fact that I could do whatever, whatever I wanted. So, he provided the North Star but she provided the, the confidence, I think.