

Betsy Wright Hawkings

Chief of Staff, Representative Christopher Shays of Connecticut

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Women Need to Be Prepared

Betsy Wright Hawkings recalls the sage advice she received from former Representative Nancy Johnson of Connecticut.

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Fortunately, as a staffer you never have to worry about what to wear on—rarely do you have to worry about what to wear on the floor. So, it's not as much as an issue for the staff as it is for the, for the women Members. But I remember, you know, Nancy Johnson, former Congresswoman Johnson always used to say, you know, people—when she would take the floor there would be this sense of, that we were not in for a short speech. And I think that was true. But what she would say, was that as a woman you always needed to show that you knew your stuff twice as well. And I think in Chris' office we needed to know our—we all needed to know our stuff backward and forward, because he was going to grill us. But he didn't, he didn't grill me any differently because I was a woman or because I was a man. He was equally hard—you know, men and women cried. But, but, but, but I know that, I know that Congresswoman Johnson and others felt that they needed to show that they knew their stuff on the floor twice as well as, as any—you know, that the best defense was good offense. And I think that, I think that as the number of women Members and staff has increased, that that's, that's less of an issue for most Members than, than it was.