

Betsy Wright Hawkings

Chief of Staff, Representative Christopher Shays of Connecticut

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Meeting with Women Senior Staff

Betsy Wright Hawkings compares the size and significance of two meetings of women in senior staff positions—one in the early 1990s, the other 20 years later.

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When majority changed and Republicans took over in 1995, Congressman DeLay who became Whip, had two of his—his senior policy person and his Member services director, two of the top three or four jobs in his office were held by women. And I would definitely count those as mentors and they used to get a group of us together. Paula Nowakowski, who was Speaker Boehner's Member services director and ultimately chief of staff, would also get the, the, a, the groups of, you know, women, sort of senior staff together. And I have a clear memory of being in the Whip's conference room—this would have been probably '93, '94, maybe—maybe it was—it probably would have been '95. Anyway. And we all fit around, you know, this table that sat 20. I mean there were, and there were empty spots. I mean, you know, and certainly everybody probably couldn't have come to that meeting, but there were probably 15—10 to 15 of us there, max. And just, well, it's now probably 18 months ago, Lynel Ruckert who was Whip Scalise's chief and Parker Poling who is Chief Deputy Whip McHenry's chief got all the women chiefs that they could find together and we took up the whole third floor of the Capitol Hill Club. Now granted, that's been 20 years but, you know, that's a whole lot better, that's a whole lot better picture.