

The Honorable Elizabeth Holtzman
U.S. Representative of New York (1973–1981)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Inauspicious Beginning

Representative Holtzman recalls her introduction to the House when discussing potential committee assignments.

Interview recorded March 10, 2016

When I was elected, I did not want to be on the House Judiciary Committee because my predecessor had been on it for 50 years. And my advisors and I in our brilliance decided that we should, I should strike out for a new territory, and try to get on a different committee. And so I went down to Washington in the late fall of 1972 to try to get my colleagues to support my effort to be on some committee other than the House Judiciary Committee. And I remember meeting with one of the top members of the Ways and Means Committee, and he was from Georgia. And he said to me, "Now, Ms. Holtzman, you don't really have to worry just because you're a Jew and a woman." And I said, "Well, I guess I'm in real trouble now." But in the end, neither one of those things turned out to be an impediment. But it was really shocking, my first introduction to the House that I would get a comment like that, both on my gender and my religion. But I found, I never found that again. I would say for the most part, maybe one or two exceptions.