

The Honorable Nancy Lee Johnson
U.S. Representative of Connecticut (1983–2007)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

On the Campaign Trail

Representative Johnson recalls campaign decorum in 1982.
Interview recorded December 3, 2015

There were, there were a lot of wonderful aspects of that campaign. First of all, I had lots of volunteers—just flooded with volunteers and they were everywhere. People would ask them, “What are you doing out here?” “Well, I’m working for Nancy Johnson, you know. You ought to really vote for her.” You know, and they would always have concrete things they could say. So, there was a lot of enthusiasm. There were no, there were very few scheduled debates, but we debated. One time, toward the end of the campaign, we debated breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I mean, you know, and it was much more natural. You know, “What do you think about this?” And I remember that last week or so we had a breakfast debate that was about an hour and 15 minutes from home. And, so, you’re up really early. So, after breakfast, we start this, and he has the first opening statement. And I’m sitting there thinking, am I not following him because he’s not making sense or am I not following him because I’m just too tired to make sense? So, you know, I think I made better sense than he did, at least to me. And, but it was, it was the way campaigns should be. It was respectful; we weren’t calling each other names, we weren’t distorting the truth. We were just saying who we are and what we’d done. And, but, it was hard-fought. It was everywhere.