

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Overcoming Resistance

Representative Johnson describes the way she maneuvered for a seat on the Ways and Means Committee.

Interview recorded December 3, 2015

Oh, there were others that were sort of before me, that they were going to put on. Then, after I didn't get on that, Rod Chandler got on. He was a good friend of mine. He said, "I'm going to manage your campaign." I mean, I didn't even know there was an outside group. This tends to be more of a gender problem that the women aren't as conscious of the sort of outside game and how you can get knowledgeable people from the outside saying you really ought to put her on. I don't know whether that had anything to it or not. But it was funny in candidating for the Ways and Means Committee. I had one male Member on the Republican Party say to me, "Well, you know, there's already a woman from Connecticut on, Barbara Kennelly." I said, "Yes, and there's two men from Tennessee. And Connecticut is the number one exporter and trading state in our nation on a per capita basis. So, why shouldn't Barbara and I represent it when you've got these two from Tennessee and these two from Kentucky"—you know, the old boys' states? So, he shut up. I mean, he didn't bring that up again. But I ran up against that a couple of times. "Well, there's already a woman from Connecticut." I said, "Well, how come you put so-and-so on when there was already a Democrat from Kentucky?"