

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

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**“Rules of the Game”**

Representative Johnson describes her willingness to challenge the powerful chair of the Ways and Means committee, Dan Rostenkowski of Illinois.

*Interview recorded December 3, 2015*

Well, when I first got on Ways and Means, I went to see Rosty. I mean, he was the chairman. And we had a respectful conversation. I knew my father knew him and he got a big kick out of the fact that I was my father's daughter. And I'm sure that kind of told him a lot because my father was his own man, too, and was very well known, also quite imaginative, and a lot of fun. So, everybody knew him, one way or another. And, so, I thought that was a good thing. And he told me the story about Ray, Ray McGrath. He said, "When you work with me, if, if I think something's really important and I do it, then I expect you to be with the bill the whole time." I'm just not—I can't constitutionally do that, you know. If provisions came into that bill that I think are really hostile to the interest of the country or my people, I can't just go along because you're taking one little piece. Partly, later on, the more I get to know about it, there will be other pieces. And, so, I could never—I never, I never played with Rosty because I couldn't agree to the, his rules of the game, but I was significant on the committee because I did debate.