

The Honorable Constance A. Morella
U.S. Representative of Maryland (1987–2003)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Equal Rights Amendment

Representative Morella discusses her inspiration to run for Congress in 1974.
Interview recorded June 16, 2015

Commissions for women were being established throughout the country. One was established in my county and I was appointed to it, actually. I had to get the approval of the county council and was appointed. And at that time, I looked around at the status quo of women, apropos of what you said about the role of women, indeed I realized that this was happening all over, that opportunities for women in professions were limited. A woman couldn't even get a credit card without having a male sign for her. So, that, that did not allow her to be able to buy a house or start a—an entrepreneurial position. And, and in education you had no women who were presidents of college, let alone principals of major high schools. And so, I thought, you know, not only do I want this Equal Rights Amendment to be passed by the Maryland legislature, but I think I want to do something more. And so, I, I then say it was the women's movement that put the movement into me—literally that is the case. I, I was teaching at a community college, and I thought, you know, the concept that, "you really need to have a seat at the table, or else you might be on the menu," as they say, you know. And, and that was what inspired me to run for office.