The Honorable Barbara Bailey Kennelly
U.S. House Representative of Connecticut (1982–1999)

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript
September 9, 2015

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

"And I campaigned, I campaigned very hard. I left my son at home when he was a little boy in grammar school in the sixth grade to come to Congress and I wanted to make it worth it. Two of my girls were in high school, one was just beginning her freshman year in college, and I wasn't going to be down here doing nothing. This was a big deal to leave home. And so I fought very hard to get on that committee [Ways and Means]. There were three openings. So, it really was a race. And you went at it, and at it, and at it. I won the first spot."

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Table of Contents

Abstract

With deep political family roots, and time on the Hartford court of common council and as Connecticut secretary of state, Barbara Bailey Kennelly came to the House in 1982 with invaluable experience and a keen knowledge of public office. Kennelly used her political connections and golf—a tool typically reserved for male Members—to stay abreast of policy issues and to earn the respect of her colleagues. In her interview, she describes her hard-fought battle for a seat on the influential Ways and Means Committee. She also talks about her leadership aspirations and ascension as the then highest-ranking-woman in the Democratic Party when she won the vice chairmanship of the Democratic Caucus for the 105th Congress (1997–1999).

Determined to stretch the boundaries for women in Congress, Kennelly aimed her sights at the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Rebuffed once, but not deterred, she eventually made history as the first woman named to the Intelligence Committee. Kennelly speaks of the connection among women Members, including her memories of how she and her female colleagues rallied around Anita Hill during the Senate confirmation hearings on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court. Kennelly's political experience, knowledge of the institution, and willingness to work within the system to achieve her personal and political goals defined her House service and catapulted her into the highest echelon of the Democratic Leadership.

Biography

KENNELLY, Barbara Bailey, a Representative from Connecticut; born Barbara Ann Bailey, in Hartford, Conn., July 10, 1936; attended St. Joseph Cathedral School; graduated from Mount St. Joseph Academy, West Hartford, 1954; B.A., Trinity College, Washington, D.C., 1958; certificate in business administration, Harvard Business School, 1959; M.A., Trinity College, Hartford, Conn., 1971; member, Hartford Court of Common Council, 1975–1979; secretary of state of Connecticut, 1979–1982; elected as a Democrat to the Ninety-seventh Congress, by special election, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of United States Representative William R. Cotter, and reelected to the eight succeeding Congresses (January 12, 1982–January 3, 1999); was not a candidate in 1998 for reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives but was an unsuccessful candidate for Governor of Connecticut.

Read full biography

Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The first reference to a Member of Congress (House or Senate) is underlined in the oral history transcript. For more information about individuals who served in the House or Senate, please refer to the online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov and the "People Search" section of the History, Art & Archives website, http://history.house.gov.

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Interviewer Biographies

Matt Wasniewski is the Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives, a position he has held since 2010. He has worked in the House as a historical editor and manager since 2002. Matt served as the editor-in-chief of *Women in Congress, 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), *Black Americans in Congress, 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008), and the *Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822–2012* (GPO, 2013). He helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of current and former Members, longtime staff, and support personnel. He earned his Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2004. His prior work experience includes several years as the associate historian and communications director at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, and, in the early 1990s, as the sports editor for a northern Virginia newspaper.

Kathleen Johnson is the Manager of Oral History for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a B.A. in history from Columbia University, where she also played basketball for four years, and holds two master's degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: *Women in Congress: 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006) and *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008). Before joining the Office of the Historian, she worked as a high school history teacher and social studies curriculum consultant.

— THE HONORABLE BARBARA BAILEY KENNELLY OF CONNECTICUT —
A CENTURY OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

JOHNSON: My name is Kathleen Johnson. I'm with the House Historian's Office, and I'm with Matt Wasniewski, who is the House Historian. Today's date is September 9th, 2015, and we're in the House Recording Studio [in the Rayburn House Office Building]. We are very, very happy to be with former Representative Barbara [Bailey] Kennelly of Connecticut. This interview is part of a project that we're doing to recognize and to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the election of Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress.

Thank you so much for coming in today, Congresswoman.

KENNELLY: Thank you.

JOHNSON: So, the first question we wanted to ask you about was when you were young, if you had any female role models, and what drew you to those particular people?

KENNELLY: I had a lot of role models, to tell you the truth. My father was the chairman of the state Democratic party for 32 years, and he was chairman of the national party through the administrations of [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy and [Lyndon Baines] Johnson. So, I had the good luck to meet many women and men, {laughter} of course, who were in politics. For example, Chase Going Woodhouse was a Congresswoman from Connecticut, and she was quite special. I got to know her because of my father. And Ella [Tambussi] Grasso, as you know, was not only the first woman elected governor in Connecticut, but she was the first woman elected governor in her own right in any of the

states, and I don't think she ever gets enough credit for that. And, of course, I knew her very well.

JOHNSON: And what, in particular, drew you to the women that you mentioned?

KENNELLY: It wasn't that I was particularly drawn to the women. Living with a state chairman, my father, I met all sorts of politicians. Adlai [Ewing] Stevenson [III] stayed at our home for a week with his family. John Kennedy took a nap {laughter} at our home. I lived a political life as a young woman, beginning as a child, really. I had a lot of role models, but I didn't think of them as role models then, I just thought it was a great life to meet these famous people. And I never thought it would be me—not that I would be famous—but at that point in my life I never thought I would go into politics.

My father always took us everywhere, to the picnics, to everything. And he always said, "If you behave, you can come." And I went to my first [Democratic] National Convention in 1952, when I was 15. I was a page. And then four years later, I went again as a page, and I've only missed two conventions since then, {laughter} which is quite amazing.

JOHNSON: What were the expectations for you growing up as a young woman, about what you would be when you grew up?

KENNELLY: My father and mother had three girls and a boy. My father's mother was the first woman commissioner in the city of Hartford, so it never occurred to my father that women were any different or less talented than men. And so whatever we wanted to do, he thought we could do, and where we wanted to go to college, that's where we went to college. As for Ella Grasso, I would say she was one of his best friends, so it was natural for me to spend a lot of time with her. But, as I said, in those days I didn't think I was going into politics, so I wasn't looking to any of them as role models.

WASNIEWSKI: What influence did your mother have on your upbringing and outlook?

KENNELLY: I had a wonderful mother, but I don't think she was influencing us to go into politics. As I said, my father was in politics for practically her whole marriage, first in Connecticut and then he came to Washington, and she naturally came to Washington with him. She knew what a tough life it was, so she wasn't encouraging us {laughter} to go into politics.

JOHNSON: What kind of influence did she have on you personally, not even politically speaking?

KENNELLY: Oh, huge. This morning as I was getting dressed to come here, she said, "Wear a skirt, don't wear pants." {laughter} I hear her all the time. She was an extraordinary woman, and I miss her dearly. But if there was one woman who was very influential to my going into politics, it was my husband's mother. My mother-in-law was a very active woman in the city of Hartford. She served on the board of education for so many years that she had a school named after her. She was also the vice chairman of the Democratic Party in Hartford for years. When we moved, our first house was about three houses away from hers. She's the one who really got me interested in politics and showed me how to be successful at it. She taught me how to register voters, how to get out the vote, how to run a committee room. It was because of her that I ran for town committee. It was the first office I ran for, and I won because of her.

WASNIEWSKI: What was her first name?

KENNELLY: Eleanor Bride Kennelly.

WASNIEWSKI: And where did she learn these skills?

KENNELLY: I think sometimes it comes naturally. Professionally, she was a schoolteacher, but more than that, education was her love, and she did it {laughter} 24 hours a day. She was a very strong woman.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that you were in a political family, and we've read about that and the influence that must have had on you, but you said that you didn't think that you would have a political career.

KENNELLY: No, I really didn't. I was an economics major in college. I went to the Harvard–Radcliffe School of Business, so I thought that I would be going into business, I really did. But I got married, and I very quickly had five children. So, {laughter} any thoughts of going into business were put on the shelf. But I became very, very active in my community. I was active in my church; I was active in the auxiliary of my hospital; I was president of the board of a large home for wayward children. I was very active in many areas of my community, which ended up being a wonderful starting point for going into politics. Then when I was in Congress, young staff would come and say to me, "I'd really like to go into politics." And I would ask them, "What are you doing here? Go home, get active in your community, and start running for lower-level offices." In those days you really went up through the ranks.

JOHNSON: Why did you eventually decide to run for Congress?

KENNELLY: I had told my husband that when my youngest child went to school, I was going to work. Here I had a B.A. and an M.A., and I wasn't using either one. {laughter} I read Betty Friedan's book [*The Feminine Mystique*] and realized I was a perfect example of someone that it influenced. She really captured the feelings so many of us had about not using our skills or brains. So, I told my husband that when my son John went to school, I was going to go to work. I

told that story once during a speech at Wesleyan University when John was in the back of the room, and he stood up and said, "She hasn't been seen since." {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: When you decided to run, were you recruited at all? Did anyone appeal to you?

KENNELLY: No. There was a vacancy on the city council, and since I was very active in the city, and I had been vice chairman of a commission for the elderly for a number of years, I decided that would be a great position for me. So, I went downtown to the boss—we had political bosses at that time—and I said, "I'd like the vacancy." And he said, "Well, you wouldn't run for the board of education when we asked you, so it's not your turn for this." I don't know where I got the courage, but I said, "Well, if you won't support me for the seat, I'll challenge your candidate in the primary." And all of a sudden, there were two vacancies instead of just the one, so we both got seats on the council without going through a primary. But that was in the summer, in August. By September, when the regular election came up I got challenged in the primary myself, {laughter} but I won. I spent a number of years on the city council and I loved it. It was real hands-on politics. I was chairman of public safety and zoning. {laughter} My children always remember that when an alarm went off for a fire, off we'd go, even if they were in the car. {laughter}

JOHNSON: And then for your House seat, when you ran for Congress, what drew you to that particular position? Why did you run?

KENNELLY: I was secretary of the state of Connecticut and had been in the office for four years. The position is a day-in, day-out job where you run the election process, and you speak a lot to encourage people to vote. The job was fine,

but to tell you the truth, I felt a little bored. About that time, the Congressman for the district, Bill [William Ross] Cotter, died suddenly in office, so the congressional seat opened up. Everyone had told me, "Well, you can stay secretary of state forever." But I thought, {laughter} "I don't want to stay secretary of state forever," and I announced my candidacy for the seat. I think nine or 10 other people also announced for the seat, but I got it pretty easily. I had just been so active in the community, that a lot of people knew me.

Although I got the Democratic nomination, the Republicans had a primary, and one candidate was a former mayor of Hartford who was very popular. The other candidate was Colleen Howe, hockey player Gordie Howe's wife, who was also very well known. It was quite a campaign. As it turned out, Mayor Ann Uccello beat {laughter} Gordie Howe's wife, so she was my opponent. That's when I thought, "This is not going to be easy." {laughter} It was a good race. Ann [Uccello] was a wonderful woman, and I thought she must have known a lot about running a campaign because she had been in Washington as a [Richard Milhous] Nixon appointee. But as it turned out, she didn't know as much as I had expected. It was a challenging campaign, but it was a fair race, and I won.

JOHNSON: What type of advice did you receive as you were starting your campaign? Is there anything that stands out in your mind?

KENNELLY: I got a lot of advice. You always get a lot of advice. {laughter} But running in that first race was a joy, it really was. You go from running in the city to running in the entire district. I'll admit, I really ran an amateur campaign. My best advisor was my husband. He had been in politics for so long that he had that experience, and he was very organized, much more so than I was. So, he always had a lot to say about what I was doing. But beyond that, I

didn't have a lot of experienced campaign help. All my friends pitched in to help me, and {laughter} we had a very good time. My mother had a very nice car, which was much nicer than mine in fact, and she loaned it to me and that's what we drove all over the district in as we campaigned.

WASNIEWSKI: Is there anything about the special election to the House, any memory in particular, that stands out?

KENNELLY: {laughter} Yes. Campaigning at this level was hard. There was so much about it that was brand-new. Instead of local concerns, suddenly you're talking about federal issues. And at that time, our campaign was mostly about President [Ronald] Reagan. She [Uccello] was a great fan of his, of President Reagan, and I wasn't, and Connecticut was in some economic difficulty at the time. So, the campaign focused a great deal on the economic impact of the President's policies on the state.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that you ran against a woman, and that certainly was unusual for the time period, to have two women running against each other.

KENNELLY: It was. And she was a very, very good mayor, very capable, so it was a challenging campaign. But it was also a fair campaign focused on the issues.

JOHNSON: How much did the issue of gender come up in the campaign?

KENNELLY: Very little. Very little. You see, Ella Grasso was still very much in the picture at that time. And we had Gloria Schaffer, another woman, who had been a longtime secretary of the state. So, the glass ceiling for women in Connecticut had already been broken. I find that once one woman makes it to a high level, it's easier for other women to make it. Look at California with two women Senators, and Maine, with two women Senators.[1] Once you

break that barrier, it's easier for others to follow, so gender was never an issue in my campaigns.

WASNIEWSKI: Was fundraising a barrier for your campaign?

KENNELLY: No, it really wasn't. You see, the whole time I was in Congress, I represented the insurance industry: Aetna, Travelers, The Hartford. You name it, {laughter} they were all headquartered in Hartford, and their workers were my constituents. And they all supported my campaigns because I worked hard on their issues. So, no, raising money was never a big issue for me. But, of course, we didn't spend anywhere near what they spend now on campaigns.

WASNIEWSKI: Were there any women's groups in particular that got behind your first campaign, supported it?

KENNELLY: Yes, definitely women supported me. Don't forget that was a very active time for women in politics. The second wave of the women's movement had already begun. It affected me, and it affected many other women who wanted to support women candidates. I'm sure I got a lot of the benefit of their activism, but of course, so did Ann, my opponent. So, it balanced out. {laughter}

JOHNSON: For people outside of Connecticut, who might not be so familiar with the area, can you just describe the district from what you remember, geographically and demographically?

KENNELLY: My district was the First District, and it was centered in Hartford, which I had represented in the city council. Although it is the capital of the state of Connecticut, the city was then and still is a very poor city. It originally had all these wonderful businesses, but most employees lived in the suburbs.

Hartford also had quite a large Hispanic and African-American population, and that was very different than my surrounding 20 towns, which were also part of the First District. So, the district had two very different parts, the poor, urban city and the beautiful, suburban towns. It's still that way today.

JOHNSON: How did that affect your campaign, with having so much diversity in the district?

KENNELLY: There's where my father helped. My father was a very democratic man, and he had worked incredibly hard to elect the first Jewish governor and to have the first black candidate on the ticket for the position of treasurer. My father was very, very active in the African-American community. They were very fond of him, and he helped them in many ways. And I know they supported me just as strongly because they liked him so much. I always won Hartford by huge margins because of their support.

WASNIEWSKI: You had mentioned that you had prior political experience on the Hartford city council and then also as secretary of state, and we're just curious, how did that experience help you on your way to your congressional career, help the early part of your congressional career?

KENNELLY: Unfortunately, not as much as you would think. Part of the problem was that I came to Congress in a special [election], because as I mentioned, my predecessor [Cotter] had died suddenly in office. I don't know if you know what happens when a new Member comes to Congress that way. I came to D.C. in January with my family and friends. I was sworn in by the Speaker of the House, and then they handed me a voting card, and that was it. You get no preparation, no training, no introduction whatsoever. You are just expected to figure things out on your own. I found my earlier experience wasn't as helpful as I had thought it would be. So, at the beginning it was

very interesting. I think I was on the Government Ops [Operations] and Transportation Committees at first. You know, they put you on whichever committee has an opening. But I knew I didn't want to stay there. {laughter}

JOHNSON: We've asked you some campaign questions, and we mentioned before we started taping that we had a couple of photos that we were hoping that you could take a look at, the pictures that we have there. Before we ask specifically about those campaign buttons, how did you make decisions about campaign items, what you wanted to use? For buttons or bumper stickers or things like that, how were those decisions made?

KENNELLY: Well, we made those decisions rather quickly, because as you know, the campaign is much shorter in a special election. And as I said, I had wonderful friends, many women who volunteered on my campaign and gave me the benefit of their experience. And, of course, I hired professionals, too, who would give me advice on what would work best in the campaign.

JOHNSON: The one campaign button that has your photograph on it, one of the things we were wondering is, why as a candidate you would do that—put your face on a button—and how important you thought that was to do?

KENNELLY: Oh, I think when you're running in a much larger area, you want people to know who you are, to put a face with the name. Everybody in Hartford knew me, but certainly in other cities in the district, like Glastonbury and Rocky Hill, they didn't know me.

JOHNSON: And as time went on, is that something that you continued? Or once constituents were a little more familiar with you, did you change it up a little bit and didn't feel you needed to do that?

KENNELLY: No, I think they like to see you. I really do. So I had my picture on much of my campaign material over the years. Of course, I've seen the picture get older, and older, and older. {laughter}

JOHNSON: So, it's the personal connection with your constituents?

KENNELLY: Yes, yes. Very definitely.

WASNIEWSKI: One of the buttons said—that's in the House Collection, from one of your campaigns—says Cops for Kennelly. We have the second one there.

JOHNSON: Yes, it should be in here.

WASNIEWSKI: So, we're just curious, do you remember that particular . . .

KENNELLY: As I said, while I was on the city council, I was chairman of the committee on public safety, which covers both fire and police, and I always was very supportive of the unions, always. And they knew it and supported me when I went to Congress.

JOHNSON: Should we go on to the next section?

WASNIEWSKI: Freshman section? Sure.

JOHNSON: When you came in, it was the 97th Congress, and as you've said, it was a special election. You were one of 21 women serving in the House.

KENNELLY: I think I was the 21st. {laughter}

JOHNSON: You were the 21st, exactly. Since there weren't that many of you in the larger number of over 400 Representatives, did you find that women gravitated towards each other?

KENNELLY: Yes. Oh, very definitely. When there's only 21 women—and that 21 includes both Democrats and Republicans—you definitely get to know each other. Pat [Patricia Scott] Schroeder had already started the Women's Caucus by then, and that's usually where we met, Republicans and Democrats together. There were so few of us, we absolutely had to. And that also meant we got to know each other very well.

JOHNSON: Were there any in that group of 21 that you remember that you spent a little more time with?

KENNELLY: Oh, yes, I was definitely close to [Corinne Claiborne] Lindy Boggs. She was beloved by everyone, but she and her husband [Thomas] Hale Boggs [Sr.] had been very friendly with my parents, so she was wonderful to me, absolutely wonderful.

I'll tell you a story about her. When I got to Congress, there were no women on the Ways and Means Committee, and no woman except Lindy on the Appropriations Committee. There just weren't many women on any of the powerful committees. So, we set up a meeting to see [Thomas Philip] Tip O'Neill [Jr.] the Speaker, and the 21 of us went in and talked to him about putting more women on important committees. But after we left, Lindy Boggs pulled me aside and said to me, "Barbara, make an appointment with Tip and go back and see him by yourself." She couldn't have given me better advice. I set up a private meeting with the Speaker, and I got on the Ways and Means Committee. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: Do you remember any of the pitch that the group made to Speaker O'Neill in that meeting?

KENNELLY: Oh, yes. We thought it was outrageous that there weren't women on the powerful committees but that it was especially wrong that those two

important committees didn't have women on them. After all, Ways and Means raises all the money for the government through the tax code and then has the audacity to spend half of it on programs, like Social Security and Medicare. And the Appropriations Committee distributes so much money to important programs that it was just wrong not to have women be part of that process.

JOHNSON: Did you mention to Lindy Boggs that you wanted to be on Ways and Means?

KENNELLY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. She was on Appropriations. She understood.

JOHNSON: For the women that you just spoke about—and you just spoke about Lindy—what other women were there that you worked with or with whom you felt a connection or a bond?

KENNELLY: I had two very close friends while I was in Congress. One of them was Geraldine [Anne] Ferraro, and the other one was Barbara [Ann] Mikulski. We were very, very close friends. Geraldine came to Hartford and campaigned for me in the early years, so I had already known her well when I came to Congress. The three of us were together on the first congressional trip I ever took. I placed Geraldine's name in nomination to be Vice President—the first woman nominated for such a high position by a major party. And when Geraldine didn't win the position of Vice President, she told me I could have her apartment when she moved. But she said, "There's one caveat, and that's if Barbara Mikulski—who had her home in Baltimore—ever wants to stay overnight, you must let her stay with you because she always stayed with me." That's exactly what I did, and that helped me get to know Barbara very well, and we have stayed friendly to this day.

WASNIEWSKI: How would you describe the atmosphere of the House when you were elected? Was it welcoming to women?

KENNELLY: Yes. I would say the House was a happy place then, it functioned very well, and there was a cordial feeling between the Members, male and female. I had many, many Republican friends, and Republicans had many, many Democratic friends. It was a different atmosphere than now. But as difficult as things are today, I believe we will get back to a better-working Congress because we have to if our government is going to work.

WASNIEWSKI: As a woman Member, though, as part of a small minority, did you feel like you faced any particular obstacles, or you were treated differently as a woman?

KENNELLY: Well, my first couple of years on Ways and Means were interesting, and I can't say my male colleagues didn't put me through the hoops. In fact, every once in a while I'll mention, say, to someone like Tom [Thomas Joseph] Downey, who served with me on Ways and Means, "Do you know what you did to me?" And I'd remind him of some of the teasing that happened, and he would say, "I never did that." {laughter} And I would say, "Oh, yes, you did." They just don't remember those days the same way I do. But after a year or so, I made sure I never let it bother me, never. I wasn't one of those women who whined and said, "Oh, poor me." I loved being on the committee and decided I wasn't going to let the men get to me.

And it didn't take long before it stopped being fun for them because I wouldn't bite. So, they accepted me. It also helped that I played golf. I had not played as much as I liked over the years because my husband didn't play, but when I got to D.C. I knew I had to take out the golf clubs. Because when we were doing tax reform, the male members of the committee would stay in

D.C. on weekends to work on the bill, and during breaks they would play golf. Those golf games helped me do my job, very definitely.

JOHNSON: How did it help you? Was it just a more relaxed atmosphere?

KENNELLY: No. Playing 18 holes takes four hours, and that gives you a lot of time to talk. {laughter} While we were playing, we would talk about tax reform ideas, and I would learn about what they were thinking and planning. That gave me an insider's view of exactly what was happening with the committee.

JOHNSON: And the more times you did something like that, did you feel as if it was easier to relate with some of the male Members, especially like on Ways and Means? Did they accept you more, a little bit easier?

KENNELLY: Oh, yes. And the things that they did were so silly. For example, one time we were working late, and I wasn't agreeing with them on some issues. When I got to the committee room they had ordered pizza, but they said, "You can't have any because you're not voting with us." You know what I mean? Just small things like that. They would do things to needle me, but I wouldn't let them know it bothered me, so it didn't last at all, not at all. My father was such a strong man that the guys didn't intimidate me. And if you don't bite, they lose interest very quickly.

JOHNSON: But the women that you came in with, the group—like you said, you were the 21st—did they offer any sort of advice or maybe give you a heads-up on how things might happen?

KENNELLY: Oh, sure. Lindy was absolutely wonderful. And Barbara Mikulski was great. Barbara and I got very friendly. We often talked on the phone on Sunday, and I'd take notes because everything she said was so helpful. She was one of the smartest people I ever knew.

JOHNSON: What kind of advice did she offer? Do you remember anything specific?

KENNELLY: Well, it wasn't advice she had, it was facts. She knew what was happening because she'd been there a while. And, as I said, she's brilliant. It was a great help to me as a new Member. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: You've mentioned Lindy Boggs a few times. What do you—looking back on her and her service in Congress and her role as a mentor—what do you think the secret of her success was?

KENNELLY: She was one of the nicest people you could ever meet—absolutely, very caring, very kind. And she knew the Congress. Hale had been in leadership. Hale had been there for many, many years, and she, as a supportive wife, knew more about Congress when she came than most people do. So, she was the nicest person and knew the most, and she didn't keep it to herself. She shared what she knew, and she was very aware of helping newer women. She had two daughters, and one of her daughters ended up mayor of Princeton.

WASNIEWSKI: Over time, different women Members have adopted different approaches to serving in Congress. Some kind of choose to work within the system that's there, and others kind of confront gender inequalities frontally within the institution and outside the institution, and we're curious to know which strategy you think is more effective.

KENNELLY: I think you need both, and no one was better at confrontation than Pat Schroeder, no one. She just laid it on the table and said it the way it was. But I picked another strategy. I picked the less confrontational road, where I knew what was going on, but I wasn't going to be quite as blatant about it. But we needed women like Pat. Absolutely.

JOHNSON: Did you feel that was kind of a tag-team approach or a good cop/bad cop, someone working outside the system, someone inside?

KENNELLY: No, no. It's just that people have different approaches that fit their personalities. And she, oh, she was perfect with the one-liner. And we know, some of them have become famous. {laughter} Pat was a young woman when she came. She had young children, and she was a great influence.

JOHNSON: Do you recall the media attention that you received when you came to Congress and it was a special election, but even in your first couple of terms?

KENNELLY: Well, of course, there was a lot of media attention at home, but not much here. I was just one more person, {laughter} one new person out of 435, so there wasn't a lot of attention paid to me. I did get a little more attention when I became a member of Ways and Means so soon.

JOHNSON: What were the kinds of questions that you were asked as a woman in Congress, and also just even if when you achieved a first, a historic first or something that was influential in your career?

KENNELLY: Well, I think once I got on the Ways and Means, I certainly got more press attention, because talk about jumping in, one of the first things we did was reform of Social Security. It hadn't really been looked at for many years. Little pieces had been changed before, but the whole Social Security system needed to be redone, and that was huge. And that took a lot of work. I had always been interested in Social Security because I worked with the elderly. But that was a wonderful experience. But, boy, you had to study and learn. I was so lucky. I had a friend named Sandy Wise, who knew Bob Ball, who was like the godfather of Social Security. She introduced us, and Bob was incredibly helpful.

JOHNSON: Did you enjoy that policy work, getting into the weeds on policy?

KENNELLY: Yes, it was interesting. When I look back on my career—and you made me do that to get ready for this interview, {laughter} because I really hadn't—I was more of a process person than I realized. I had my legislation, and I knew what I had to do, and I knew who I was in Congress to represent, but I like to see the process work. Now I teach politics, and when I look back I realize that the whole first article of the Constitution is all about the Congress, and it gives them so much power. So, with all that power the process has to work, and I became kind of a process person, which I was always surprised at. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned a little bit earlier the Women's Caucus. We want to know some of your memories about that. It had been around for about five years before you came to Congress.

KENNELLY: Yes.

WASNIEWSKI: But how often did you meet? What did you discuss?

KENNELLY: Well, Pat was the head of it for years. And we met in the Lindy Boggs Room, which was appropriate.[2] Now, it wasn't perfect by any means. We had Republicans and Democrats together, because why would you have two separate groups when you had so few women? {laughter} And there was always the issue of pro-life and pro-choice that always separated us to a certain extent, it really did. But there were also many issues that we agreed on, like equal pay, childcare, education, and we would come together on those. It worked, to a point, but the most important thing was you really got to know each other.

JOHNSON: What kinds of things did you work on, even outside of legislation? You said you got to know each other better. Can you provide an example of that?

KENNELLY: Well, some of the same issues that haven't been addressed today were definitely on the table, like day care for children. By that time more and more women were working, and every other developed country has a wonderful day-care program because they know the mothers are working, and the children should be well taken care of. But we've never gone very far as a nation in providing good programs—in some states, yes, but not in the country as a whole. Violence against women, that was also a big issue—it still is a big issue. Pregnancy leave was something that we all agreed on, and that did happen, to give women time off when they had a baby. Even though it's been a long time since then, they're just now talking about possibly paying those women when they have that six weeks of leave. It's taken years, and we still haven't done it.

One of the issues affecting women that I was very active in, one of the things I'm very proud of, was child support enforcement. To me it was terrible to have a man marry a woman and have maybe one or two children, and then decide he didn't want to be married anymore so he walked off, and there was no child support for the woman to take care of those children. When I was secretary of the state I got into that issue, and so then when I came to Congress, I introduced legislation, and the last chairman of Ways and Means, Dave . . .

WASNIEWSKI: Dave [David Lee] Camp?

KENNELLY: Dave Camp and I worked together on that bill. And I was very pleased when it passed.

WASNIEWSKI: Looking at the caucus and its successes, and strengths, and weaknesses, what role do you think it played in the institution?

KENNELLY: The Women's Caucus?

WASNIEWSKI: The Women's Caucus, yes.

KENNELLY: I think it's always good to get women together because women have lived [their] lives differently than men. So I think it played a very important role. Always, it's a good idea to sit down with people who have common problems and talk about them, and we were there to solve those problems. And I was active in the caucus; I attended the meetings and had input.

JOHNSON: We know that sometimes informal, and maybe even formal, meetings took place in what's now called the Lindy Boggs Reading Room.

KENNELLY: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: How important do you think it was for women Members to have that space reserved just for you?

KENNELLY: Absolutely important. And even when I come back as a former Member, I can go to the Lindy Boggs [Room]. The women go there to have very candid conversations among ourselves. It was a place to relax, and it had much the same role as the Women's Caucus: to give us a room, finally, that we could go into and be ourselves, and you could have debate, and you could have friendships.

JOHNSON: Were there any other places that women would meet sometimes, or dinners that you might have had, places where you had a chance to talk?

KENNELLY: Yes. There were so few of us. You had special friends and people you liked better than others, of course, but when you have that few, you worked together. When I got to Congress, I had just missed Bella [Savitzky] Abzug and Barbara [Charline] Jordan. They were wonderful. I would love to have served with them. And you watch the other women—Barbara Mikulski, as I said, taught me a lot.

JOHNSON: Are there any others that you watched or kept an eye on, something that drew you to them?

KENNELLY: Yes, there were, yes, all of them. We knew each other well. {laughter} You think about how many friends you have, and remember we only had 20 women total, so you all got to know each other very well. Some you liked better than others.

JOHNSON: And some of the women we talked to said that if there were a group of you together, that sometimes your male colleagues would wonder what you were up to or if you were working on something.

KENNELLY: Those things never bothered me.

WASNIEWSKI: So we're going to switch to committees and firsts and leadership positions. You've mentioned already part of the story about how you got onto Ways and Means.

KENNELLY: I didn't just "get onto" Ways and Means, I had to run for Ways and Means. I always said it was one of the toughest elections I ever was in. Usually, there would be one or two vacancies on Ways and Means, and they were very sought after. Well, for some reason, when I was running for Ways and Means my first full term, there were, I think, 13 people running, and it was a race. It was an absolute race. You had certain people helping you, and you had to

know how to count votes. A gentleman by the name of [William Richard] Bill Ratchford from Connecticut had tried very hard to get on Ways and Means and hadn't made it. My husband replaced him as speaker in Connecticut, and we were good friends, and he said, "Barbara, I'm going to help you because I made some mistakes and I don't want you to make the same mistakes. You have to get a yes. You can't get, 'Oh, you'd make a good member of Ways and Means.' There's so many ways for people to avoid making a commitment, you need to hear, 'Yes, I'm for you.'"{laughter} And so he was very helpful.

And I campaigned, I campaigned very hard. I left my son at home when he was a little boy in grammar school in the sixth grade to come to Congress and I wanted to make it worth it. Two of my girls were in high school, one was just beginning her freshman year in college, and I wasn't going to be down here doing nothing. This was a big deal to leave home. And so I fought very hard to get on that committee. There were three openings. So, it really was a race. And you went at it, and at it, and at it. I won the first spot. And then Ronnie [Gene] Flippo and Byron [Leslie] Dorgan won the others—the second and third openings—and we became very friendly. It was a great experience. But I'll tell you, it was hard. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: When you say "campaign," what did that entail?

KENNELLY: Well, you talked to just about every member of your caucus. You tried to get a good reading of what was important to them, and you told them why you would be a good member [of Ways and Means]. And, of course, obviously you talk to the Speaker, and the Majority Leader, and Dan [Daniel David] Rostenkowski, who was not for me. {laughter} Oh, that race is in my head! {laughter}

JOHNSON: And there had been so few women who had served on Ways and Means, and you were the only one at the time, when you got onto it.

KENNELLY: I was the third woman in history.

JOHNSON: So, how important was gender? Was that an issue when you talked to Members about your wanting to serve on the committee?

KENNELLY: They'd never say it, but I'm sure that it was an issue. Ronnie Flippo and Byron Dorgan were running for the openings—and then I can't remember the others, but they were all good. Nobody was running who wasn't a very good candidate. But no, I absolutely thought there should be a woman on that committee.

JOHNSON: Did you have the support of most of your women colleagues in the Democratic Party?

KENNELLY: I hope so, but it's a secret ballot. {laughter} I don't know.

JOHNSON: You mentioned meeting with Tip O'Neill, and that Lindy Boggs had suggested that. What do you remember about that meeting?

KENNELLY: Oh, the reason I think Lindy—in fact I know Lindy suggested it—is because in a large group of 20 people, you can't take the mark on somebody, you really can't know what they're like. He asked me many questions, and while we talked I think he was sizing me up. And he ended up being for me. And Jim [James Claude] Wright [Jr.] was for me. Danny was the only one who wasn't. You want me to tell you a story?

JOHNSON: Yes, please.

WASNIEWSKI: Sure. {laughter}

KENNELLY: Danny was against me for political reasons. It started with that unbelievable convention in 1968 in Chicago. Abe [Abraham Alexander] Ribicoff from Connecticut had given a speech against Mayor [Richard J.] Daley, right to his face. Ribicoff was up at the podium, and Mayor Daley had his delegation right up front because the convention was in Chicago. And Abe said, "This is wrong, and the police are acting terribly." You don't do that to Mayor Daley when you're in Chicago. {laughter} Danny never got over it and so had no interest in anybody from Connecticut. But it worked out. And I adored him later. We had some differences, but I grew to really admire him.

JOHNSON: Did you win him over eventually?

KENNELLY: Yes. Oh, yes.

WASNIEWSKI: Can you describe—he seems like one of the old bulls who carried over from the 1970s era and ran that committee—can you describe his leadership style in the committee?

KENNELLY: Oh, yes, yes. We knew exactly what he was thinking. At one time there was a [*Washington*] *Post* or *Wall Street Journal* article, I can't remember which, about Danny and his relationship with women on the committee and, of course, obviously I was the woman {laughter} they were interviewing. I said something like, "Am I going to change Danny Rostenkowski? I don't know, but I'm certainly going to try." Well, he didn't like that at all.

And since I was a Representative from Connecticut, I did represent the insurance companies. A lot of my work on the committee was insurance taxation, and that's how I got some women's issues passed because I would support people on their amendments, and then they would support me on mine. So, one day he spoke against my amendment, and he didn't often speak on legislation before the committee. I had an amendment, an insurance

amendment, and I spoke for it and he spoke against it, and the amendment passed. And the committee went on a wonderful trip after that. It was to Africa, I think. I didn't go. {laughter} I did not get invited, and I was in the doghouse for quite a while because my amendment won even though he had spoken against it. A tough guy—you knew exactly where he stood.

JOHNSON: But that was typical treatment, that wasn't because you were a woman on the committee.

KENNELLY: Oh, no, no, no. He was not happy that my amendment won; it had nothing to do with my being a woman. {laughter} And then a couple of years later I got a call. My husband never wanted to come to Washington because he had his own law firm in Hartford. But he loved to travel. He'd always traveled, since he was a young boy. And he loved to go on the trips, on the CODELs [congressional delegations]. So, he was a little disappointed {laughter} because for a couple of years I didn't go anywhere. And then one day he [Rostenkowski] called, and he said, "We're going." I don't know where it was, and he said, "Love you to go." And that was it, the punishment was over. But you understood Danny. You knew if you did what he wanted, you were in good shape. But you couldn't always do what he wanted.

JOHNSON: Did you ever feel like you had to work harder on the committee just to prove that you belonged there, and you were just as good as your male colleagues?

KENNELLY: I had to work hard on the committee anyway, especially at the beginning. Reforming Social Security was huge. It was absolutely huge. I had to do an awful lot of study. And then after we reformed Social Security, we went right into tax reform, and that was incredibly complicated.

So, no, you had to work on that committee, you really did. And when you pass legislation, you never really know what it will affect in the long run.

When we were doing Social Security reform, there were many improvements and big changes to the program. One was we raised the age for full retirement from 65 to 67, and I never thought what that would mean for the people affected. My daughter had just become a freshman at Yale. As a result of our changes, when she turns 65 she won't be able to retire; she will have to wait until she turns 67. {laughter} Now I never thought when I was voting on that change that it would affect my daughter {laughter} to that extent. But that's how legislation like that passes. You don't have controversial changes go into effect immediately. You don't even have big changes go into effect the next month after the bill passes. You put it off into the future.

WASNIEWSKI: You and Nancy [Lee] Johnson were the only women on Ways and Means for most of your career.

KENNELLY: I think I was seven years as the only one, and then Nancy came on.

WASNIEWSKI: But what are your memories of working with her on the committee?

KENNELLY: Oh, we were friendly before she came. Nancy was a senator in the [Connecticut] state legislature. My husband, of course, was in the legislature, so we knew each other. And the press always used to try to find ways to get us on opposite sides, and we didn't play. We didn't bite. We stayed friendly for years, and we still are very friendly.

WASNIEWSKI: Even though she was on the other side of the aisle, did you ever work with her on any particular legislation?

KENNELLY: Yes, on women's legislation, yes. And you have to remember, in those days you had moderate Republicans, and so there were a number of issues that we agreed on, especially for the state.

JOHNSON: You certainly touched upon this, but I just wanted to ask you directly how important you think it was to have women on committees like Ways and Means that were dominated by men for so many years.

KENNELLY: I think it was terribly important. You bring a whole new aspect to issues. Your arguments can be very, very different. You've lived life as a woman, and that brings a different set of experiences. Having been in social service for so many years before I went into politics, I knew a lot about people who were disadvantaged. I knew a great deal about handicapped people. I certainly had worked with the elderly. So these are things that men often hadn't done. An awful lot of people go to Congress from the state legislature, but I'd worked at the city level in a very poor city.

So, yes, I think women look at those issues much differently [than men do]. And even on Social Security, I look at things differently. I understand it. I understand what it means to be a poor woman and have that check as your only method of support. We worked so hard for housekeepers to be covered by Social Security, that men didn't think about. Women bring a whole other approach to legislation. There are many, many, many ways women and men are the same and in many, many, many ways we're very different.

WASNIEWSKI: In 1987 you became the first woman to serve on the Permanent Select Intelligence Committee.

KENNELLY: Nineteen what?

WASNIEWSKI: Nineteen-eighty-seven.

KENNELLY: Oh, I thought it was later. Yes, it was wonderful.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes. We're curious to know, why did you want to join the committee, and how did you actually get a seat on it?

KENNELLY: Well, it's very much the same as I've said before, that I got more interested in the process of making the Congress work. One day I noticed there was an elevator towards the Senate side, and it had a rope around it, and I noticed people going up and down, and I finally asked, "What's up there?" It was the Intelligence Committee. So I investigated to figure out exactly what the Intelligence Committee was—it wasn't talked about much.

At that time I had become very, very interested in the Sandinista-Contra situation in Nicaragua. My second trip in Congress was to Nicaragua, and I was on the committee investigating the six Jesuits that were murdered. So, I was very interested in that. Ronald Reagan was doing his thing, and his people were doing their thing, and there was a Boland Amendment that was absolutely not being looked at, not followed, and I got very interested in everything about what was happening in that country.

And so I went to Tip, and I said, "Tip, the Intelligence Committee addresses life and death, war and peace." And I said, "There's no woman up there." And he looked at me, and he said, "Barbara, are you never satisfied?" He just couldn't believe it. And I said, "No, I think a woman should be up there." So, he didn't appoint me. And then when Jim Wright [became Speaker], I said the same thing. And he said, "Barbara, I think you've been an exemplary Congresswoman. Yes, I will appoint you." Danny Rostenkowski was furious. He said, "How would you do that? You're only supposed to be on one committee when you're on Ways and Means." But you could get an exception for a select committee, and he was not happy. He was not happy. I loved the Intelligence Committee. I just loved it. I learned so much about the world.

And, of course, there had been a little fuss, a little scandal about someone who said something they shouldn't have outside the committee, and so {laughter} I made a joke once: I'd say to my husband, "I'd love to tell you what I know, but I'd have to kill you." {laughter} But you didn't say anything. You did not say anything. You went up to that room, and you came out of that room, and it was not an easy committee to be on because the CIA and the people that worked in intelligence, they didn't want to tell you anything. You had to know what to ask. If you knew what to ask, they absolutely would answer you. The State Department would tell you. But if you didn't know what to ask, you didn't get any information. So, you had to really poke around and do your work.

WASNIEWSKI: That's a committee that requires a lot of homework, a lot like Ways and Means.

KENNELLY: Oh, yes, yes. So, that's why I think, as I said, that process was more my thing.

JOHNSON: Is that something you learned by experience, just knowing what kinds of questions to ask and how to get the information you needed?

KENNELLY: You had to work on it. You really had to work on it, and there were a lot of things going on. I mean there's always something happening in some part of the world. Sometimes people say, "Well, they weren't that effective." But you couldn't talk about the places that you were very effective. One of my projects was to help women, wives of people that were in the intelligence world. They got no benefits. They had no benefits for spouses I and put in legislation to have them get fair treatment. I was always aware of issues relating to women.

JOHNSON: What kind of welcome did you receive on that committee, since you were the first woman to serve there?

KENNELLY: Well, I think they knew I had an awful lot to learn. Very definitely. But the staff in the Capitol and staff on the committees, they're excellent. They're very good. They know new Members are joining their committees and they don't know that much. And, oh, I got friendly with one of the staff who I'm still friendly with, and he helped me immensely. And then I had a wonderful young woman from Connecticut who came to work for me here because I was on the Intelligence Committee, and she got to know more and more about the issues because she had to staff me. When I left, she was hired directly by the Intelligence Committee. She went way up in seniority and made a career out of it.

WASNIEWSKI: [Louis] Lou Stokes was chairman during your first term.

KENNELLY: Yes.

WASNIEWSKI: What are your memories of his leadership of the committee?

KENNELLY: He was a wonderful man, just a wonderful, wonderful man. He took time with me. Definitely took time with me.

JOHNSON: You chaired one of the subcommittees for the Select Intelligence Committee. How would you describe your leadership style?

KENNELLY: I always enjoyed being a leader. And I think you can see examples starting when I was younger. When I was in high school, in my senior year I was president of the student movement, and I was vice president of the class, and I played Christ in the Easter play. And, I'd figured I'd peaked. {laughter} And so I liked leadership. I really did.

So, they expanded the Whip operation after Tom [Thomas Stephen] Foley became the Speaker and a lot of people were very unhappy with our

leadership. We had a horrible time over Jim Wright, it was very sad. And then Tom came in, and the Members demanded that leadership be expanded. In the beginning he appointed three Whips and later there were four Whips: a woman, an African American, and a Southerner, Butler [Carson] Derrick [Jr.]—we never figured that one out —{laughter} and then a Hispanic.

So, we had an office in the Capitol, and we had an assistant and, oh, boy, were those the days interesting! {laughter} Unfortunately, we lost the majority after that and we went back to our regular offices {laughter} and lost those perks. But that's when I started in leadership. Originally, the Whip positions were appointed by the chairman of the caucus and secretary in both the Republican and Democratic Party in Congress. Well, our side was always a little more forward, so they changed it to be an elected vice chairman. And I ran, and I won.

And I ran twice. Louise [McIntosh] Slaughter was the other candidate in one race, and I won by two votes, but I think I ran before that though I don't remember who I ran against. I know I ran twice because I was in the position three years. So, I like leadership.

END OF PART ONE ~ BEGINNING OF PART TWO

WASNIEWSKI: We're going to pick back up with some leadership-related questions. We're going to come back to vice chair of the caucus, but we wanted to ask you before that, you also served on the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee.

KENNELLY: From very early on.

WASNIEWSKI: Yes. We'd like to know how that happened.

KENNELLY: Well, as Speaker, Tip O'Neill appointed the people on the Steering and Policy Committee, that's how that happened. He appointed me, and I served for years.

WASNIEWSKI: Did you have to make a special pitch to him? How did that come about?

KENNELLY: No. One day I was just notified that I was going to be on the Steering and Policy Committee. I must have had a good meeting. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: Sounds like it. How would you describe the experience of working on the Steering and Policy Committee? I don't think a lot of people maybe off of Capitol Hill know what that is. What does it do?

KENNELLY: The members of this committee choose which people will be on all of the other committees, and it's very serious. And I took it seriously, just like all of the members on that committee did. You meet, and you discuss your colleagues, and you decide who would be the best for each committee and where they would fit in. You know the decision has an effect on people's lives. What committee you serve on is very important. You never want to say, "I'm so important. I'm on the Ways and Means Committee or the Appropriations Committee," even though you know Members feel that way.

But people get on other committees, and if they really burrow in and become totally knowledgeable, they can have a real effect on major legislation, so you never want to say there's only a couple of important committees—all committees are important. There is such a difference between authorization and appropriation for programs, it's hard to compare them. You have people

like Nita Lowey, who have worked on Appropriations and are experts at it and have become very close to their committees. And, of course, if you stay on a committee, you have more influence; it has a lot to do with seniority.

WASNIEWSKI: Did you feel like the leadership at the time was looking to promote women and put them on committees? And was that something that you had a special eye, looking out for?

KENNELLY: Well, I think the Women's Caucus did at that time, because otherwise why would we have made the appointment with Tip? Why were we talking among ourselves about how to increase our influence? We knew we weren't truly represented in places that we had a real interest in, and we wanted to change that in any way possible.

JOHNSON: Tip O'Neill—his name has come up quite a few times—how would you describe your relationship with him?

KENNELLY: My relationship was good. He loved to play golf. And I had gone a number of times up to Massachusetts and played golf with him, and I will tell you one story. We were down in South America, though I can't remember which country we were in. I had told him that I wanted to play—I was pretty good then, so he liked including me. They played every morning at 6:00 am sharp, and one morning, {laughter} I just couldn't get there that early. So I skipped and the next time he saw me, he said to me, {laughter} "Barbara, you said you were going to play golf, and I expect to see you there." I didn't miss another one, I can tell you that! {laughter}

JOHNSON: Who was part of that group that played every day?

KENNELLY: The group changed because Tip would pick the players. When it was a CODEL that Tip headed, he could pick golfers from all the committees.

I do have another good golf story. I went to China with John [Patrick] Murtha [Jr.] and one other Member, I don't remember who it was. But John and I were the two golfers, and we played quite a bit. One day we went out, and we were playing against two Marines, at least I think that's what they were. And it was very hot, very, very hot. When we finished, I went into the ladies' room, and this woman came in. She had a big, wet towel and threw it over my head and looked very concerned. I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "You have heat exposure." So, I looked in the mirror, and my face was really red and had blown up. I couldn't believe it. She kept me in there for a while, and things calmed down. When I went back out, I said, "John, you didn't tell me how bad I looked. I almost had a heatstroke." He said, "Barbara, we were winning." I'll never forget it! {laughter} He wasn't going to tell me because we were ahead. It was good I didn't fall and get hurt. {laughter}

JOHNSON: How would you describe Speaker O'Neill's leadership style in the House?

KENNELLY: Wonderful. Wonderful. Tip was an absolute leader. But at the same time, he was a very kind person. And he cared, oh, he cared so much for the House. And he'd been there so many years, he had watched strong leaders like Sam [Samuel Taliaferro] Rayburn and other leaders who were examples of how to lead, absolutely. But he did it with a wonderful manner, so people followed his lead, there's no doubt about it. One of the few times I went against it was when the Marines got killed over in . . .

WASNIEWSKI: Lebanon?

KENNELLY: The Marines were blown up. And Geraldine [Ferraro] and Barbara [Mikulski] and I had just been there. It wasn't Jordan, it was right across from Israel. Yes, it was Lebanon. We had gone from Israel to Lebanon, and

we had stopped to visit the Marines. They had had an explosion at the embassy a couple of weeks before our trip, so we visited the Marines, and we came home. I think it was 178 of them had been blown up, and when we got back, Congress had a vote on whether people would stay there or leave. I think it was the only time I really went against Tip because he wanted them to stay. And he came up, and he took ahold of my hand, and he said, "You've got to vote with me." I said, "I can't, I just can't." Because we had seen how open it was and how they didn't have adequate protection. And that time I just couldn't vote with him, but that was a rare occasion. Even the way he asked you to vote with him showed he was a leader.

JOHNSON: And when you couldn't vote with him on certain issues like that, how did he respond?

KENNELLY: He was a grown-up about it. But I felt badly. I don't think he felt terrible because he knew there would be other votes. {laughter} But it was hard for me to vote against the leader.

JOHNSON: Did you have a special New England connection, do you think, being from Connecticut?

KENNELLY: Yes, yes. I got very friendly with the Massachusetts delegation, and, in fact, we are close to this day. We had a lot of common interests and have become good friends.

JOHNSON: You also served under Speaker Wright and Speaker Foley. How would you compare their leadership style?

KENNELLY: They were totally different, totally different. As a Majority Leader, Jim Wright was wonderful. And as a Member of Congress, he was wonderful. He spoke, as we all know, beautifully, and he was a very good Majority Leader.

Unfortunately, when he became Speaker, his personality changed somewhat and it, I wouldn't like to say it went to his head, but he changed, and he was more dictatorial than anyone ever expected. And he didn't have a particularly happy leadership. Though I always thought they made much too much of the book thing. When something like that happens, it's heartbreaking for everybody in the chamber. But he knew he had to leave, and he did.

JOHNSON: What about Speaker Foley?

KENNELLY: He was a very, very kind man—a bright man, a wonderful man. I liked him very much. I think he made a better ambassador {laughter} than he did a Speaker. He was perfect as an ambassador. He was a very good Speaker, don't get me wrong. But he was almost too . . . he could see both sides of a question. He was almost too fair to be a tough Speaker.

WASNIEWSKI: You talked a little bit about getting into the Whip operation and just curious about your philosophy for what makes a good Whip.

KENNELLY: Well, you have to know if they mean it or not. {laughter} They have all different ways of answering your questions. It's just like when you're running for a spot on a committee, you have to get that "yes" and know it's really a "yes." Some of the Members become absolutely expert about not saying yes but letting you think they're saying yes. So, I wasn't crazy about being a Whip. I loved being in the leadership, but I wasn't crazy about being a Whip because you're bothering people all the time. You're at them, you're at them, you're at them. You keep telling them, "You've got to tell me, you're going to tell me how you're going to vote," even though they don't want to tell you. But a good Whip will find out anyway.

WASNIEWSKI: Do you remember a particularly hard piece of legislation or a monumental piece of legislation that you had to whip for that . . .

KENNELLY: Well, there were many. But the thing is, you didn't whip unless you had to. A lot of issues weren't whipped on. They weren't that important, and especially when we had the majority, you knew you were going to win the vote because we didn't need everyone's vote. But there were some issues that people felt very strongly about, and they didn't like to be asked how they were going to vote. And you really had to whip them and go back again and again to talk to them and get them to change their vote, and then you'd have to report they weren't with you to the other leaders. But I don't remember right now any particular one because there were so many, so many. Let's see, there was one when Jim Wright kept the machine open forever. And one where a Congresswoman from Texas came running down, and I can't remember what that vote was, but that was a tough one. That was a very tough one and had a lot of bad feeling after it.

Oh yes, the worst one for me was Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky. She was the deciding vote on President [William J. (Bill)] Clinton's 1993 budget. I encouraged her to vote for it, and I've always regretted it because the vote cost her her seat. And there were others from safer seats who could have taken that tough vote instead.

JOHNSON: Did you feel like you learned more about the institution and about Members, being a Whip, seeing a different side?

KENNELLY: Oh, yes. You definitely got to know the Members better. And you had to know the issue. Because some of them wanted to know the information, and some wanted to give you a hard time to make sure you knew the information because you were telling them what to do. {laughter} Yes, Whip is a busy job, a very busy job. I can't say it was my favorite job in the [House]. But it was one way to get into leadership. Now there are a huge number of Whips.

JOHNSON: How significant were these firsts and these milestones that we've been talking about—you being the third woman on Ways and Means, the first woman on Select Intelligence, being a Deputy Whip—how important do you think those were to the institution and then also to you, personally?

KENNELLY: I think they were very important, very important. When I left Congress I was vice chair of the [Democratic] Caucus, and there's no doubt if I had stayed I would have run for caucus chair. The next woman who went into leadership after me was Nancy Pelosi, and you see how far she got. You open the door a little bit, and that makes it easier for the next woman to go right through the door. So, yes, you have to have firsts, and the firsts don't always make it up to the top, but they get the doors open. And I think it's very important to make those efforts, and you feel very good about it, you really do. And I loved being a leader.

WASNIEWSKI: You made a push in 1989; you ran for Democratic Caucus Chair {laughter} against Steny [Hamilton] Hoyer.

KENNELLY: That was not for real. {laughter} Eddie [Edgar Lanier (Ed)] Jenkins, from Georgia—he was on Ways and Means and one of the nicest guys I ever knew. There was some disenchantment with the leadership at that time and this is what happened. I think that was during Speaker Foley's time. Some of us didn't especially like how leadership was going. But we weren't going to go against Foley, {laughter} that was for sure. So Eddie and I and a group of others decided we would make a statement. Eddie would run against [Richard Andrew] Gephardt, I think. Yes, against Gephardt, and {laughter} I ran against Steny Hoyer. We knew we weren't going to win. We knew, but we were making a statement. {laughter} I think of it often. I think, I bet Steny—he's such a gentleman—I bet Steny thought, "Who the heck does she

think she is?" But it never was with any intention of winning it was just to show that we weren't happy with the way leadership was going.

WASNIEWSKI: Did you get a response from leadership for that?

KENNELLY: No, because we lost so badly, it didn't matter. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Not the statement you were hoping for?

KENNELLY: Oh, yes, we made a statement. The statement was okay because we knew we couldn't win; no one thought we were going to win. The fact that we ran was the statement we wanted to make, and we made it.

WASNIEWSKI: What do you recall about your campaign for vice chair of the Democratic Caucus? And, in particular, how you tried to convince your colleagues that you were the most qualified person for that position?

KENNELLY: You campaigned for leadership like you always campaigned for anything. It went on, well, not real campaign speed, but you were constantly talking to members one-on-one-on-one and asking for their support. The chairman of the caucus was Vic [Victor Herbert] Fazio [Jr.]. And I was very friendly with him and he was very helpful. We made a good team.

JOHNSON: You ran against Louise Slaughter.

KENNELLY: Oh yes, that was quite a race. {laughter}

JOHNSON: And there was a lot of press attention because there were two women running against each other.

KENNELLY: Oh, was that a toughie. I'm trying to remember, and I think that's something I have to research because I'm quite sure I ran against her the second time, but I didn't run against her the first time. I can't even remember who I ran

against the [first time]. But Louise and I ran against each other, and well, sometimes you get hurt in politics. I always thought George Miller was a very good friend of mine, and he ran her campaign. So, he wasn't that good a friend of mine. {laughter} Louise was, and still is, very, very talented. But that was a tough race, it really was. And I think I won by one vote or something. {laughter}

JOHNSON: It was really close, right. Who ran your campaign?

KENNELLY: I don't think anybody ran my campaign. Yes. I was vice chairman, so I guess I thought I was going to walk away with it . . . {laughter} You never know what people are going to do. But, no, I don't think anybody ran my campaign.

WASNIEWSKI: Did you enjoy that aspect of going out and convincing colleagues?

KENNELLY: Yes. I enjoyed being in the leadership. {laughter} I wanted to be in leadership. {laughter} And then you realize the next woman that came into leadership, a few years later, was Nancy Pelosi, and she went right up to the very top. Now that was something I was so thrilled about. She and I went to the same college, and we knew each other before Congress. And I've just been delighted at her whole service as a leader, both when Democrats were in the majority and the minority. And she's been, I think, fantastic. She doesn't get enough credit for what she has accomplished. I don't think the press covers her enough for what she has done as a woman, as a Speaker, or as a Minority Leader. She has really done the job, while being totally feminine and being close to her family. She's just a great example of how women can do it all.

WASNIEWSKI: Interesting you mention that, because you made history becoming the vice chair, the highest-ranking woman in leadership. Of course, she became the

highest-ranking woman in congressional history, both of you coming from family backgrounds that are so deeply rooted in politics.

KENNELLY: We both came from Catholic families and even went to the same college.

JOHNSON: And also families that were involved in politics.

KENNELLY: Yes, our fathers were quite friendly and both very political. {laughter} We went way back. And she's done a magnificent job.

JOHNSON: When you were elected Democratic Vice Chair, and you made history, you certainly had a higher profile in the House. What did that do for your career, and did that change your day-to-day responsibilities?

KENNELLY: Yes, the caucus met quite a bit, at least once a week. And so we were very involved in the agenda, and then, of course, we had leadership meetings once a week. So, there was activity. I was the lowest on the seniority ladder, so I would be given my marching orders.

JOHNSON: And how were you accepted in that leadership circle, that small leadership circle?

KENNELLY: Oh, fine. I'd been there long enough to have earned some respect. I'd never played "poor me." {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: You talked about your pride in seeing Nancy Pelosi move up the leadership ladder, to the Speakership, but just to step back and get your thoughts about how important it is to have women in leadership positions.

KENNELLY: Oh, absolutely. Because, as I said earlier, men and women look at things differently, and some of the issues are so important to us—like day care,

violence against women, equal pay, and health care—the issues go on and on and a woman feels stronger about them, I believe.

And so, of course, I don't think Nancy gets much credit. I think it's because she does the job so well that she doesn't get as much fame as she should. When you think [about it], she was third in the line of succession; if the President and Vice President were together—and they are together often—if something happened to them, she would be the President.[3] And she handles the job so beautifully. She became Speaker because that's what she wanted to be, and she was going to be a good Speaker. And if she wasn't Speaker, she was going to be an equally good Minority Leader. She really cares about the party and its future.

JOHNSON: I wanted to switch topics back to a very important event that took place for women Members and women across the country, the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill hearings [in 1991]. What effect do you think that had on the women who were serving in the House at the time?

KENNELLY: It had a great deal . . . because this is where we came together so completely. Some of us were on the floor speaking about women's rights, going over to the Senate, it was a big moment. It was a very important moment. And I talk about having admiration for women, how about Anita Hill? She was not the kind of woman who wanted to bring that attention on herself at all. But she was convinced that she had to say what needed to be said.

It really showed that women still had so far to go. That's what I thought, and I constantly tell my students, that, yes, we have come forward a great way. But we've got so much further to go, so much further to go. And I worry terribly because the millennials don't feel that they want to go into politics. And, of course, part of that is that they don't teach civics in high schools like

they used to, so they don't understand the Constitution. They don't understand that the only way a democracy works is to have the people involved, and for everyone to be willing to compromise. And that's not taught to them. I find millennials are wonderful people, but they don't seem to feel any responsibility for the government or the country. Our government doesn't work without the participation of the citizens, and compromise.

WASNIEWSKI: To go back just a bit, quickly following on the heels of Anita Hill, we had the 1992 elections and what the press dubbed "The Year of the Woman."

KENNELLY: Oh, I loved it.

WASNIEWSKI: {laughter} Because so many women were elected. In the House they basically doubled their numbers, almost. What factor or factors do you think played into that big spike in numbers?

KENNELLY: Well, I believe the economy had something to do with it at that time. And it was '92, we were still seeing some of the Reagan love and all that happiness and sunny outlook he had. And, also, the Democratic Party made an effort to get women to run. Now I was vice chair of the caucus at that time, and Tom Foley picked himself, Dick Gephardt, Vic Fazio, and myself, and we went across the country to California and met women candidates all the way over, and then we came back across the country, meeting them all the way back. We were so thrilled to have more women running for office. And it was a very exciting time. And then the awful thing was, two years later the Congress went Republican. So the excitement disappeared, {laughter} just like that. And many of those women lost. Many of them lost. It was a big high followed by a big low.

JOHNSON: Did you serve as a mentor to any of these new women that came in?

KENNELLY: Yes, to some I did. For example, Loretta [Sanchez], I served with her, and I helped her. She lived with me for a while. Oh, yes, while I was there, I got to know every woman in the Congress. I was so thankful to the people that helped me, and I knew how important money was to a new woman Member.

JOHNSON: What kind of advice did you offer these new women coming into Congress?

KENNELLY: Work hard, and enjoy your life—those were two things. But you don't have to give too much advice because they'd been campaigning, and they know what they want to do. But I'd tell them to be friendly and welcoming, like Lindy was.

JOHNSON: And given your experience, and especially since you were in leadership, were there any types of questions that you were asked by some of these people?

KENNELLY: Oh, they got friendly with you. And you got friendly with them. And I made a particular effort by the way I was active to make sure I got to know them all. But I'll tell you, when a woman gets to Congress, they're very happy. Most of them are willing to take all kinds of advice, and they're just delighted to be there.

WASNIEWSKI: When Jeannette Rankin served in Congress—we've done research in news articles—there seems to be a real inordinate amount of attention is paid to her dress and her demeanor as a woman. Do you think that that changed over time? Or did you still feel like the press or observers of Congress judged women differently during your career?

KENNELLY: Well, it wasn't as bad as when Jeannette Rankin served. I believe that some of the reporting involved what a wonderful cherry pie she made {laughter}. I don't think it was that bad, but yes, the press could be a real problem. Oh, I remember when Mrs. [Hillary Rodham] Clinton was in the Senate, and there

were stories about her top and whether she was showing too much cleavage that triggered a big article. But if you looked at the video, her top was fine. {laughter} It was nothing, absolutely nothing. Outrageous things like that still happen, yes. And they will continue to happen if a woman does something particularly different. Who was the first woman who wore pants? I think Barbara Mikulski, maybe.

JOHNSON: Pat Schroeder made headlines for that.

KENNELLY: That's right. Pat Schroeder was the first one. That was a big deal. {laughter} And we were so delighted that the rest of us were all wearing them immediately. Yes, anything you do like that attracts attention. Bella Abzug's hat—that was a big deal. But to me, those are totally unimportant. What's important to me is to get more women in the Congress. Say what you want. Do what you want. If you have enough women, the press won't notice as much anymore. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Because there are so few women that were elected to Congress, did you feel as if you weren't just representing your constituents, but you were representing women across the country?

KENNELLY: Yes, yes. I was really in that second wave of women getting liberation. And as I said, I don't know how many times I read *The Feminine Mystique*. And so, of course, I was just thrilled about any woman that was making it in politics. I think most women that came into politics felt the same way. They had a lot of pride that they made it, and that's why they often were so helpful to other women.

I've spent a lot of time talking to women about running. I've joined groups to encourage more women to run, and that's one of the reasons I'm teaching. I never thought that I was going to be a teacher. I never wanted to be a

teacher. But I decided to teach anyway, so I can encourage young women to go into politics. But it's very difficult to sell that message today.

JOHNSON: That just made me think of an article that we came across that you had mentioned, not too long after you were elected, about the role that your daughters played on getting you more involved in the women's rights movement. Is that something that . . .

KENNELLY: To tell you the truth, it's funny you mention it. I discussed this same question with my business partner this morning, and I don't think that was true. I really don't. {laughter} Their father had been in politics before me, and he had had some disappointments. He was a wonderful legislator and was an excellent speaker of the house in Connecticut. But then he tried to run for lieutenant governor. No, he tried to run first for Congress and didn't make it. We had a convention fight, and he didn't get the votes. So, then he tried to run for lieutenant governor and didn't get that, either. My girls adored their father, so they weren't that big on politics. So, I don't know where I said that. And I haven't seen any of them go into politics. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: I just want to follow up that you talked to a lot of women, young women, to encourage them to run for politics, and that there are obstacles to that. What are some of the obstacles that you see?

KENNELLY: Well, I'll tell you about the latest obstacles—in fact I get kidded at the university because they say that I say constantly to the students, "I really want you to run." {laughter} So, I guess I say it too much. But parents want a woman to go to college, and so many of them want to go to law school, and they don't think they're going to make any money in politics. It just doesn't look like a long-term job to make money in, especially with all their student loans. And, then, of course, they always say, as so many people said all

through the ages, "Why would you want to get into that business with all the back and forth and sometimes not good things said about each other?" There are good reasons for them to hesitate. You have to be a little tough to get into politics, no, a lot tough.

JOHNSON: If you had someone come back to you and say, "Well, I don't want to run because of those reasons," what would your response be to try to convince them that it's worth it?

KENNELLY: I'd tell them, "If you don't run, somebody else will run, and they might not be as talented or have the same good reasons that you would have to run." Don't get me wrong, there will always be people running. What you want is the best. And the ones that are not in politics for themselves but are in there for their constituents. If the good won't run, the bad will.

WASNIEWSKI: Looking back on your career, are there any women staff from your office or from some other organization, or committee, or Member staff in the House who you recall as standing out, being important?

KENNELLY: I had a very good staff. Very, very good staff. And many of them have stayed in the business. As I said, one of my first staffers, who stayed with me the entire time I was in Congress, became quite well known and quite successful in the Intelligence Committee. And right now Maria [Freese], who was with me this morning, she and I are business partners in a lobbying firm, and she was on the Hill. She was an important tax staffer on the Finance Committee and worked on the Hill for 17 years. After I left Congress, I ran a large nonprofit for Social Security, and she came to work for me and helped me immensely because she knew pensions, knew Social Security. So, yes, you often take good staff with you when you leave Congress. I know many Members of Congress who are around town, and often right with them is a

former staffer. That says a lot about their relationships, that they go to a big lobbying firm, and they take their staffer with them. Maria wasn't my staffer, but I knew her when I was in Congress, and we always worked together very well.

WASNIEWSKI: During your career, the number of the women in Congress increased, the number of women staffers on the Hill increased. What impact do you think that those women staff had on the institution?

KENNELLY: I just met one in the ladies' room that remembered me from years ago. Oh, I think women staffers have a great dedication to their Members or to their committee. As I said before, when women who worked here in D.C. would talk to me about going into politics, I would say, "Go home, get involved in your community, so you have a base of support." But another thing that also worried me over the years was, women are very dedicated when they take a job, and many women came to the Hill and got into it and then got seniority and became chiefs of staff, and I would say, "Go home or get married." The hours here are terrible. And so if you go into work early in the morning and you stay till late at night, you're not going to meet [anyone] unless maybe another person you work with. That happens sometimes, but not that often.

Oh, I could tell you a story {laughter} about one of the reasons that Dan Rostenkowski didn't want me on Ways and Means. And, by the way, I adored him. Hey, listen, if you can't have a few fights with somebody, the relationship isn't worth anything. But anyway, I did adore him, but in the beginning, he wasn't particularly happy about me coming on the committee. Before I got there, [Andrew] Andy Jacobs [Jr.] was on the committee, and he had married Martha [Elizabeth] Keys, and then they got divorced, which was uncomfortable for everyone. And one of the arguments that Danny used against having another woman on the committee was, "We don't want to

have that happen again." I took a good look at the committee, and I thought to myself, "Who would I want on that committee?" {laughter} It's a weird place, it's an incredible place. But you spend so much time together, you all become very close.

WASNIEWSKI: And you were married at that point.

KENNELLY: Very happily married.

WASNIEWSKI: Martha Keys wasn't married. {laughter}

KENNELLY: I guess not. {laughter}

JOHNSON: We just have a few retrospective questions to wrap up. We know that you ran for governor of Connecticut.

KENNELLY: You notice I never bring it up.

JOHNSON: Yes. But what we wanted to know, was why you decided to run for governor and to leave the House at that time.

KENNELLY: For all the wrong reasons. As I said, my father was very, very involved with the state of Connecticut and the Democratic Party. And at my house, going to Congress, even being a Senator, wasn't the biggest deal in the world. But being governor of the state of Connecticut was a very big deal, and I grew up knowing that the governor was the most important office in the state. Plus, we were in the minority [in the House]. And my husband had just died, and it took me a little while to—no, it took me a long time to get over it—plus, I was being asked, in fact, I'd been asked to run for Senate twice, and I turned it down. But I was being asked to run for governor, and I took the wrong road.

The best day I had running for governor was the day I announced. Unfortunately, I was running against a very popular incumbent [John Rowland] who had a lot of support, not only from his own party but from some in my party, too, which I didn't know. I had totally submerged myself into Congress, and I represented my constituency completely, but I didn't know what the most important issues in the state were as well as I should have.

In fact, as I mentioned to you before, I played golf quite a bit, and Bill Clinton, who was President at the time, asked me to go to Martha's Vineyard to visit him, and we played golf. Afterwards we had dinner, just the six of us, at his house, and he said, "I really brought you up here to tell you not to run for governor." And he went into how when he had run the first time it was the wrong time, and it didn't turn out well, but I didn't listen to him. I didn't run a good campaign, and I lost big. And I regretted it. To this day, I still regret it because I would still be in the House if I hadn't done it. I made a mistake, but you make mistakes.

Hillary [Clinton] came in to campaign for me twice. And Bill came in to campaign for me. And we were down in Southport, at Martha Stewart's home. She threw me a party, and the President was coming to it. And Martha was Martha, and the President came in a helicopter, and Martha wasn't ready because she was changing all the seat assignments. I hope that she doesn't see this. {laughter} Anyway, I went out to meet Bill—the Secret Service took me out to meet Bill—and I walked across to that helicopter, and I thought, "Oh, what am I doing here? Where is my husband?" Then we got in the car, and Martha still wasn't ready for us, so we drove around the town. On every corner, the people were all out to greet the President. And he said to me, "Barbara, you know you're not going to win." And I said, "I know."

And he said, "Just keep your dignity, and keep going, and I'll take care of you." And, of course, that was very nice of him, and having been on Ways and Means, I thought, "Oh, maybe I'll get to be ambassador to Trinidad or one of those places that I could play golf. {laughter}

After I lost, I made an appointment to go down to personnel, and they talked to me, and they talked to me. Finally, I left, and I went back to my chief of staff, and I said, "I don't know what they're saying." So, the next time he went with me, and {laughter} he knew what they were saying. I'd been very active in Social Security all through my career, and he said, "The President is thinking of proposing Social Security reform, and he'd like you to be with him because you know Social Security so well." And so, "I'd like you to be the counselor to the commissioner of Social Security." {laughter}

So, I went there for two years. I had the best time. The commissioner didn't like to travel. I had traveled all over the world, with the Congress and outside the Congress. But I hadn't really traveled in the United States. We had a beach house, so that was always where we vacationed. So in this job I traveled all over the United States. I saw places you can't even believe, because we have Social Security offices all over the country. I made more good friends during those two years—in fact, many are still very good friends today. And then I didn't think Al [Albert Arnold] Gore [Jr.] would do that well [running for President], so I left and got a new job with a lobbying firm. And I was right: {laughter} He didn't win. I kept that job as a lobbyist for two years, and then I headed up a very large nonprofit.

But {laughter} I should not have run for governor. That mistake, I know very well. In fact, I never mention it. I'm sorry you mentioned it. {laughter}

JOHNSON: I'm sorry, I had to ask. {laughter}

KENNELLY: It was not a good experience.

WASNIEWSKI: There are now 108 women in Congress. There's 88 in the House and 20 in the Senate.

KENNELLY: You know, 108 is not even 20 percent yet, even though we are 50 percent of the people.

WASNIEWSKI: But the question we have—we've asked this of everyone we've talked to so far—is how many women do you think will be in Congress 50 years from now on the 150th anniversary of Jeannette Rankin's election?

KENNELLY: I certainly hope there will be a critical mass. You see, the problem we have now is, even if all the Republican and the Democratic women got together and voted together and pushed the nation together, they're not a critical mass, so they couldn't be successful. But I'm sure by then, we will have enough numbers that we can achieve change on our own.

WASNIEWSKI: And how do you think that will come about? What needs to change?

KENNELLY: Oh, so much has become equal already. In school, we're equal; law school, we're equal. In fact, I think there are more women doctors and law school students than men, and our numbers keep growing, and you can't stop that kind of movement. So, the numbers of women in Congress will keep growing, too. But these Congresses right now have to behave a little better, so the people will want to run. We all know that a lot of people are turned off, especially the women, and that needs to change.

JOHNSON: Do you think that your political career and your service in Congress inspired any women to run for political office?

KENNELLY: At home, yes, I do. Some of the women I know saw how much I enjoyed it, and at home I've had many, many, many women say, "I'd love to be like you, I'd love to run for Congress." But will they? I don't know. I tell them, "At least run, even if it's just for the board of education or a planning commission." There's something like 600,000 local elective positions in the United States, and the number of women in them is still quite small. But look, we have three women on the Supreme Court. We've come a long way. And then I have to say we have a long way to go. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: If you could offer a couple sentences of advice to a young woman who was thinking about running for Congress or running for political office, what would that be?

KENNELLY: I'd say, "Do it. You don't have to do it as a lifetime career. But it certainly will help your country and your community if you run for office. We are a participatory government. We need you. And it's not like going into religion where you have to sacrifice yourself totally." But, really, it is a duty because the Constitution gives so many powers to Congress—go to war, collect the taxes, take care of the currency—all these powers are given to Congress in Article I. But you have to have good people there, and smart people, to make it work. And that means you have to have both men and women. My concern is that the schools aren't teaching enough of why this government doesn't work unless people are involved in it. Otherwise, it just doesn't work.

JOHNSON: Was there anything unexpected or anything that surprised you from your time in the House?

KENNELLY: Yes, that I loved it so much. Honestly, I don't think going into it that I ever thought I'd be that happy. And I loved every moment of it.

JOHNSON: What specifically did you love so much about it?

KENNELLY: I loved representing the people of the First District. I love politics, and I loved being active in politics and getting more women to be involved. And I'm very proud of some of the things that I worked on. The earned income tax credit was a big thing for me in Ways and Means because it was making sure that low-income people with children got a good tax break, and that was so important. I worked on a number of issues for families that made life easier for them.

But I have some regrets about Social Security reform; for example, for the first time, we required people to pay taxes on Social Security after a certain income level, but we didn't adjust the limit for inflation. Now that should be changed because people who don't earn that much are paying taxes on their Social Security. So, you don't get everything right. But making life better for Americans, what's better than that?

WASNIEWSKI: That's all of our prepared questions. Is there anything you think we missed? Or anything you'd like to add?

KENNELLY: No, I think you were great.

WASNIEWSKI: I wanted to ask you one follow-up question, though, and that's because you mentioned Chase Going Woodhouse, who served in the '40s and just, do you have memories of her?

KENNELLY: Oh, I can see her right here in my [mind]. She was a businesswoman. And she worked right in Hartford. So, I was able to get to know her.

WASNIEWSKI: Did she talk about Congress a lot? Did she share stories?

KENNELLY: Oh, sure she did; she loved Congress. She was a wonderful person. And then, of course, we had Clare Booth Luce from Connecticut. I didn't know her

really, but we all knew about her. We all read about her, and she was quite a good role model.

JOHNSON: And you said you were good friends with Ella Grasso.

KENNELLY: Yes and no. I knew Ella Grasso my whole life because my father and she were incredibly good friends. He was the party boss, and she was in the legislature and secretary of state for 12 years. She and he worked very closely together. She was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. And they were partners in legislation. He had been the legislative commissioner, and he did put a lot of his time into the house and the senate in Connecticut, and she wrote his speeches. They were partners, and I was just John's kid.

And when I ran for secretary of state, she had a candidate she wanted very much to win. Plus, she had another candidate that she wanted, too, though not as much as the first. We don't have primaries in Connecticut, we have conventions, and I was very late deciding to run because I had been in charge of the investigation into why the coliseum [Hartford Civic Center] roof collapsed in Hartford. After it was done, I had to leave the city council because other people on the council were involved in what happened. People had talked to me about running for secretary of the state, but at the time I wasn't interested because I was so involved in this investigation. But afterward, when I realized I had to leave the council, the convention was coming up, so I put my name in to run for secretary of the state because I knew I wanted to stay in politics.

And she was very unhappy because I won over her candidates twice in floor fights. She put one candidate in for the nomination, and I beat her. Then she put another one in, and I beat her, too. But I had my husband, who was in the legislature, helping me. I had the majority leader of the city council, who

had all sorts of urban friends, and they were supporting me, too. I had many, many, many friends in that convention, and Ella was very unhappy about it. And the next morning she called me, like, at 6:00 in the morning, and she said, "Your father would be very unhappy." I said, "If my father had been alive, I wouldn't have done it. {laughter} No way." But, so, as a result, when I was serving we never had a close relationship, which I always felt very badly about. But I was the kid.

JOHNSON: Politics.

KENNELLY: That's politics.

JOHNSON: Right.

WASNIEWSKI: And Woodhouse was the secretary of state as well. Yes, that was a real . . .

KENNELLY: She was a wonderful woman, wonderful woman. Oh, just a delight.

WASNIEWSKI: And she's got a great oral history at the Library of Congress.

KENNELLY: She was a businesswoman. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: Yes, yes. Well, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate it.

KENNELLY: Well, thank you for having me. As you can tell, I loved the Congress—loved every minute of it—and I love to talk about it.

JOHNSON: Thank you for sharing that with us, we appreciate it.

NOTES

[1] Reference to California Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and Maine Senators Olympia Jean Snowe and Susan Margaret Collins.
[2] Since 1962, the Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Reading Room (named after the Louisiana Congresswoman in 1991) has been reserved for women Members.
[3] As outlined in the Presidential Succession Act of 1947, the Speaker of the House is second in the line of succession to the presidency.