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

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript
June 16, 2015

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

"I feel women have a special responsibility. All Members of Congress have the responsibility to all their constituents. But if there are issues that particularly affect women and their role in society, ergo also families, I think there's a responsibility. I'm going to care about my science and my constituencies that are involved in biomedical field, and whatever, and my federal employees, but if there are some issues that deal with family and medical leave, educational opportunities, particularly for women, then I feel I should speak out and I feel that I should try to garner support among the other women."

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Abstract

With her teaching background and a strong record of community activism, Constance A. (Connie) Morella made a smooth transition into the political realm. Morella served on the Montgomery County (Maryland) commission for women and in the Maryland general assembly before winning a seat in the House. As a Republican Congresswoman representing a swing district in close proximity to Washington, D.C., Morella sought to balance the demands of her constituents with the Republican Leadership—especially after her party gained control of the House in 1995.

In her oral history, Morella discusses the special bond that emerged among many of the women Members who served in Congress during her tenure. She explains the importance of the Congresswomen's Caucus, which she co-chaired, in bringing attention to issues like women's health and domestic abuse. Morella speaks of the role of gender in her campaigns and described how she believed in representing all women, not just those residing in her district. Known for her attentive constituent service, Morella's committee assignments (Science, Government Reform, and Post Office and Civil Service), along with chairing two subcommittees, allowed her to advocate on a range of key issues for her district.

Biography

MORELLA, Constance A., a Representative from Maryland; born Constance Albanese in Somerville, Middlesex County, Mass., February 12, 1931; graduated from Somerville High School, Somerville, Mass., 1948; A.B., Boston University, Boston, Mass., 1954; M.A., American University, Washington, D.C., 1967; professor, Montgomery College, 1970–1986; member of the Montgomery County, Md., commission for women, 1971–1975; member of the Maryland state house of delegates, 1979–1986; unsuccessful candidate for nomination to the House of Representatives in 1980; elected as a Republican to the One Hundredth and to the seven succeeding Congresses (January 3, 1987–January 3, 2003); unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the One Hundred Eighth Congress in 2002; United States Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003–2007; faculty member, American University, Washington, D. C.

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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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 CONSTANCE MORELLA OF MARYLAND —
A CENTURY OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

JOHNSON: Today [June 16, 2015] we're very happy to have former Congresswoman Connie [Constance A.] Morella with us. This is part of an oral history project that we're doing to recognize and to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the election and swearing-in of Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress.

So thank you again, Congresswoman, for coming in today [to the House Recording Studio].

MORELLA: It's a pleasure, thank you.

JOHNSON: When you were young did you have any female role models?

MORELLA: I must say, I think my female role model was my mother. It may sound pretty corny, but quite frankly she was a hardworking woman who had very little education and yet she was able to assist and help me traverse the difficult waters of growing up as I did. I had a cousin, also, who was pretty close to me. And she was not married and she was kind of like an aunt, although she was actually a cousin, and she would make sure I had special tap lessons, and played tennis, and took me to restaurants, sort of as her child. So a hardworking mother who had her values in the right place, a cousin, and then I also had some teachers who along the way helped to motivate me and say, "You can do it, I want you do this. Will you try it?" I must say, the value of education, the value of the mentoring that comes from teachers for young people, I think is underestimated.

JOHNSON: And what were the societal expectations when you were young, as a young girl and a young woman, as far as what you would be when you grew up?

MORELLA: I was one of six children. I was number four after three brothers, so three older brothers and suddenly the female comes along. And so she is sort of pampered, overly protected {laughter} and the expectation is that she would do well in school, not necessarily go to college—maybe a teachers' college possibly—get married, have a family, and be a nice young woman. The expectations weren't beyond that. They weren't scientist, doctor, lawyer, engineer.

WASNIEWSKI: How did you first become interested in politics?

MORELLA: Actually I became interested in politics only in school, not to run for office beyond my elementary and secondary school, but frankly, I sort of wanted to be a leader. And why? I just think I wanted to be accepted and I wanted to be involved with what was happening, and so actually I ran for office in the ninth grade. I ran for office in high school. {laughter} I also ran for office in college, at Boston University, and at that time you couldn't run for president. A woman secretary—it was secretary. So that also had to do with the status quo at that time, in terms of expectations of females. But I never thought about running for state or national politics.

WASNIEWSKI: Were there any women at that point, when you were going through school, who served as political role models for you?

MORELLA: Not really. I read about, of course, Eleanor Roosevelt and some of the things that she had done. I remember Clare Booth Luce and a few of the Members of Congress, but not really that much. I really was not that attentive to those women figures beyond my own sphere.

WASNIEWSKI: And we had read in background research that when you settled with your family in Montgomery County [Maryland] and you began teaching, that you joined the Montgomery County Commission for Women and we're curious

to know did your service on this committee have an impact on your future as a legislator?

MORELLA: Well, when asked about were there any female role models, I must say, someone from afar and around that time, in the late '60s, early '70s, I developed a great appreciation of a woman in Congress, whom I'd never met, Martha [Wright] Griffiths, from Michigan. And she introduced the Equal Rights Amendment. It had been introduced before, but nothing ever happened with it. But this time she introduced it and it was not going to get out of the Judiciary Committee because the chairman just didn't feel that this was appropriate, the right thing to do. She did it via a discharge petition, and I thought that gal's got spunk, dedication. And when you think about it, how difficult and arduous it is to get a discharge petition signed by 51 percent of the Members, many in the party of the chairman, many who disagreed with the issue, many who just want to get along, but she did it.

At that time, spurred on by that endeavor, the bill, the Equal Rights Amendment, was signed by President Richard [Milhous] Nixon, who never gets credit for something like that. But he signed it, so it had to get 38 states to sign on; that's not easy, also, another perilous course. So commissions for women were being established throughout the country. One was established in my county and I was appointed to it, actually. I had to get the approval of the county council, and at that time I looked around at the unequal status quo of women. Indeed, I realized that this was happening all over, that opportunities for women in professions were limited. A woman couldn't even get a credit card without having a male sign for her, so that did not allow her to be able to buy a house or start a job in an entrepreneurial position. And in education you had no women who were presidents of colleges, let alone principals of major high schools, and so I thought not only do I want this

Equal Rights Amendment to be passed by the Maryland legislature, but I think I want to do something more. And so I then say it was the women's movement that put the movement into me, literally that is the case.

I was teaching at a community college and I thought the concept that "you really need to have a seat at the table, or else you might be on the menu" made sense. And that was what inspired me to run for office. I ran for office in 1974; 1974, maybe people who are steeped in ancient history might remember that was the Watergate year and I can remember knocking on doors and people saying, "Do you believe in the double standard?" "Of course, not." {laughter} Well, what they meant was the fact that Nixon had been pardoned, that was the double standard.

I lost that election. I lost by 500 votes. But that didn't matter, you either win or you lose, and I lost. But I like to point out to young people, particularly young women, that you're going to have a loss along the road, you're going to have many, but you gain from each one and if you don't try you'll never know. So the concept of "no guts, no glory," go for it, you'll gain something from it. And so I did, I ran again. I was, again, teaching at the community college. I ran again, and I won and I topped the ticket by, I think it was perseverance. And so there's the story so far. {laughter}

JOHNSON: When you ran for the U.S. House, did someone recruit you to run? Or was this of your own volition, something you wanted to do on your own?

MORELLA: This was my own volition. I had, obviously, friends who encouraged me, because when I was on the commission for women I helped establish affirmative action plans, also at my college, Montgomery College, and in our school system . . . did a lot of that, and spoke at many clubs. There were people who thought it would be good if I ran, but not any strong

encouragement, or fortification, or we'll help you if you run. And so I did it myself. I decided. I, obviously, spoke to my husband and the family about it and they all thought, "Yes, if I could do it, fine, it would be a good thing to do." And so I did not get the outside encouragement of a political party or high-powered groups.

And again, that's something I think is a difficulty that women face. And some studies have been done that women don't always get the encouragement that maybe a guy gets along the way . . . They say, "Yes, you'd be a great candidate." And so I think we need to foster that support more, to spot the people that we think would do a good job—male as well as certainly female—and encourage them by saying, "We know you can do it and frankly, we'll be able to help you"—going beyond just "we want to encourage you to, we want to also show you some roads where you can get some help."

JOHNSON: Did anyone offer you any helpful advice along the way, in your early campaigns?

MORELLA: I'm sorry, did?

JOHNSON: Did anyone offer any helpful advice?

MORELLA: Well, of course. Oh, yes. I had a lot of good friends. I had a number of people who were in politics, too, who had worked for Members of Congress, who gave me some insights, who became very good friends, and colleagues, and partners. So, yes. And besides, you seek advice, too. You learn it. If you're running a campaign you'll have a program, some of the things you want to do. Then I think you seek leaders. You introduce yourself to them. You meet with them when you can and so you establish further credibility and you establish also further support and very helpful support.

I must say, as I became a member of the state legislature I was able then to garner more support from some non-governmental organizations. Some groups, the Women's Campaign Fund from the very beginning, were very helpful to me. And what groups like that do is they then direct you to other groups where they think you can get help according to what your beliefs are. For instance, environmental groups helped me a great deal, too. And a number of other groups did, too, so you build it. You see, it's the multiplication that takes place.

JOHNSON: When you ran again in 1986, what lessons did you learn? What did you take from the campaign you had in 1980?

MORELLA: I wasn't supposed to win. What I took from that campaign is that it was an open seat, but they had a long line of Democrats running for that seat. The one who won the nomination, he actually ended up with the dubious distinction of spending the greatest amount in a losing House race in the country. He was a multi-millionaire. He was in the state senate; I was in the house. He was in the majority party; I was in the minority party. And so even though I got the endorsement of like the *Washington Post* and other sources, the polls and the political pundits expressed, "No way she's going to win this election." I think it came about through personality. I won't say any . . . {laughter} I don't mean a daunting personality. I meant people connection. I knocked on so many doors, my children would say, "Elect our mother and get her off the streets." And even now I've had people say, "I remember you came to my house." Now that's like 30 years ago. "You still remember that?" I used to go to the Metro, the subway stations in the morning and I even used to have hand-warmers in my pocket, so I could warm my hands before I would shake them quickly.

And I remember my assistant, after I was elected, she said, "Somebody called and they wanted you to officiate—a man called—wanted you to officiate at his wedding." And she said, "But she doesn't have the authority to do that. How do you know the Congresswoman?" And the answer was, "I met her at the Metro station and she seemed like a nice lady." So it's a matter of connection with people. I think that helped do it.

I must say something about my opponent [Stewart Bainum, Jr.] in that race, that significant race. He had his election night party—he was expected to win—a party at a fancy hotel in Rockville, Maryland. I had mine at the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] headquarters in Wheaton and all the press were up at his and then they had to come down, that was kind of fun to see them bouncing in late, {laughter} but he came to where I had my event and shook my hand that night. I never forgot and I've had many opponents since then. We have become good friends, as a matter of fact. But I just thought that was just so gallant, just so very neat of him to do that.

JOHNSON: A good side of politics.

MORELLA: Yes, right, right.

WASNIEWSKI: Aside from getting out and meeting people and connecting with people, was there any one moment during the campaign where you felt like you turned a corner—an important moment, a key moment?

MORELLA: I think there was a nice article in the *Washington Post* on the front page about my opponent {laughter} that helped me. I say that because it had to do with him having somebody get strings put on his tennis racket. {laughter} That may not have been a turning point but I will never forget that. I think it was Rob [R. H. Melton] who wrote the article. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: Was gender an issue in the campaign at all? And if so, how did you approach that issue?

MORELLA: Well, I would sometimes, some people, in knocking on doors and meeting with them would say, "Are you running as a woman?" {laughter} "Well. I don't know how to answer you. I'm not running as a man." But I didn't push women's issues. The point is I wanted to represent everybody on all of the issues. And so I wasn't running as a candidate because I was a woman, even though these have always been important issues to me, but I think every time you elevate or give opportunities to women you elevate a society. It brings stability. So yes, there would be a few questions like that. I'd get a lot of questions about, "How can you do that with a family?"

And there was one critical point when I lost my first election for the state legislature. Two years later an opening occurred in the state senate because the man who had been in the state senate was elected to Congress. It created an opening.

And so for that seat—and it was going to be a Republican seat—I had to appear before a committee of my party and I was the only woman and there were like four men. And I remember when the chairman asked me the question, "Well, Mrs. Morella, with your large family, do you think that you would be able to give the appropriate time to take care of the responsibilities of being a state legislator?" That was an epiphany. I knew I wasn't going to get it by virtue of that very question. And I didn't. Now, if my husband had been there, they would have said, "Oh, Mr. Morella, this is so fantastic. You have a great family, and a position, and I therefore know that you do understand all the responsibilities you would face." So that was an example of the double standard.

WASNIEWSKI: You mentioned your husband. What role did he play in your campaign?

MORELLA: He was kind of—this is a cliché—"the wind beneath my wings," but he knew politics. As a matter of fact, he was Judge [John] Sirica's lawyer when the [Watergate] tapes case went to the Court of Appeals. Yes. And he had worked for John [Vliet] Lindsay. You may not remember John Lindsay. This is ancient history.

WASNIEWSKI: From New York.

MORELLA: John Lindsay was a Member of Congress from New York. It's the Silk Stocking District. Right. And so, so he knew a number of people. In fact it may have helped that some of the people that he slightly knew I contacted later. As a matter of fact, Jim Baker even did a fundraiser for me at that point, too, and it was again, through people that I knew in the political sphere who were in the [Gerald Rudolph, Jr.] Ford administration, by and large. And so Tony was very helpful but he never did any of the handshaking, the streetwalking. If I had a debate he might show up late and sit in the back and nobody would know he was there. He never influenced me on voting. When I made votes on the impeachment [of President William Jefferson (Bill) Clinton] and the Iraq War, my husband did not know how I was going to vote. Neither did my staff, until I did. {laughter} So he was always behind the scenes.

But obviously, you can't pull off this without knowing that there's somebody who still cares and understands the time element. And I must say, my children, I hope they didn't suffer too much from it, but obviously it's a matter of priorities and there were like weekends when, "If you want to come with me, fine, but I've got to cut a ribbon," or "I've got to give this speech,"

that kind of thing. For somebody to succeed in politics it requires a family, a group who are supporters.

JOHNSON: We touched briefly upon fundraising, but how much of a barrier was that for you?

MORELLA: I hated fundraising, but everybody hates fundraising. And we did it, we did all kinds of fundraising. We did fundraising from little parties where we'd say, "Contribute if you can," from major events with a dinner, with a speaker, where we charged big money. Or, it's not big money today but it was then, maybe $500 or $250 a person. That was big. We did golf tournaments. They were kind of fun. And I don't even play golf. But what we would do is I would meet with them at the beginning with coffee and then somebody would explain the rules. And then I would go to the 18th hole with somebody and sit and wait for the first group to come by. When they came by I hit the, I had the opportunity to do the, to putt, and if my putt was better than theirs they could count it, otherwise they could do their own putting. And then we'd have a picture taken. It was great. I didn't have to do much work and everybody came to it.

I did something at a beauty salon once, too. Everything you do, everything in terms of fundraising. One of the things that was very profitable that I did not like doing was making phone calls. I had an adage. My adage was, "It only hurts for a few minutes," and that is getting that number, dialing that number, but once you got them, I think women can raise money as well, maybe even better than men can. The problem is women don't give money {laughter} as readily as men do. I would much rather speak to a guy on the phone to write a check because his check will be double what his wife's check would be. And I think it's because we're more economical. {laughter} We watch where our money goes {laughter} very closely but, so I really didn't

have trouble raising money. I didn't like it but I didn't have trouble and we did, wherever we went.

I remember when I was in Paris, we had a group of business people and a friend of mine from the states was involved and so he said, "We really want you to speak about what OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] is doing," and so I did and then afterwards I went around the table and shook hands and got everybody's card. What I really wanted to do, reminiscent of the old congressional days, is to write a thank-you note to each one of them, and then {laughter} send them a solicitation, because that was a style that worked. I didn't, though.

JOHNSON: We read about the personal attention that you gave your constituents, handwriting, the thank-you notes and, again, how people would remember that for years.

MORELLA: Oh, they save them. I went to a funeral, gave the obituary. Nancy Dacek had been a member of the [Montgomery] county council. And along with the pictures and memorabilia, there's a framed letter that I had written her {laughter} and it was framed. Yes, and so people keep those things.

JOHNSON: Did you receive a lot of support from women's groups, financially for fundraising purposes?

MORELLA: I did. They were groups like the Women's Campaign Fund. We had, when I was in Congress, there was a group on the Republican side comparable to EMILY's List, that was called WISH (Women In the Senate and the House). Unfortunately there is no WISH List anymore, which says something about a problem that the Republican Party faces with regard to women. What it has become is Republicans for Choice, so it includes men as well as women. Because WISH List, just like Emily's List, there are some social issues that are

important to them and yes I did. NARAL would give me some support also. So did business and professional women. And yes, I did pretty well. There may have been some I didn't even know about.

WASNIEWSKI: One of the questions we had for you actually had to do with the campaign button image that we handed you there. We're curious to know, what was the reason for putting your signature on the button of all things that you could possibly put on?

MORELLA: Well, I think it's a personal element. When you put your signature on a button it's not just printed, it's something that you did. It shows how you write it. Besides, {laughter} it was readable and unlike my husband's you could read it. {laughter} But you know, actually it went even beyond the "Connie Morella." Actually I even had a button that was just "Connie" and I'm kind of chuckling now because Hillary's campaign is "Hillary," Bush's campaign is "Jeb!" Everybody's going into this first name bit. {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: Right—a way to connect with people. How did you make decisions about campaign materials, generally, during each cycle? What you were going to do in terms of a button or bumper stickers?

MORELLA: We had a lot of varieties, even in terms of the color, and what it would look like, and I guess it was just really personal taste in terms of how it would appeal to others. And so we tried a lot of different things. We even had a poster at one point, "When you think about good people in Congress, sending good people to Congress, you think about Connie Morella," things of that nature. Very often trying to make it as personal as possible, but also visible, so it's not too crowded. If you know my record in Congress, Jeannette Rankin would approve of it. {laughter}

I was perhaps the most independent and the most liberal Republican in Congress, but I had that kind of district. I had a district that was a majority of the other party, which was really, when I think about it, retrospectively, I wish more districts were like that. Because it, inevitably, when I put a piece of legislation in—but a number of my colleagues were doing the same thing at the same time—when I put in a piece of legislation, I would immediately hunt the Democrats to get on it. I wanted to show that it had the scope of both parties' support. The same time the Democrats would run to me. "Would you please get on my bill," so they could show a bipartisan piece of legislation. And so my whole record shows that I was sort of out-of-the-box, independent and, yes, kind of issue-oriented.

WASNIEWSKI: That actually reminds me of a question that we didn't ask, which was to get you to describe your district, physically, but also demographically.

MORELLA: Well, remember districts change. And it has even changed several times since I was in, since I held the office, also. And that's something we need to, I hope that our governor of Maryland will decide that he wants to really push hard for an independent commission for the redistricting to be followed by town meetings, so people know what's going on before it actually happens, and it's pretty much time to do it now, before the next census.

My district was diverse. But it was a district that was so important to federal government. I had a lot of federal employees, one of the highest number in the country, not the highest but among the highest of federal employees. I had an incredible high-tech area. Our high-tech knowledge corridor, and we had the companies, the companies that were doing all the biological, medications, and whatever.

I had some incredible institutions: the National Institutes of Health, I had the National Institute of Standards and Technology, I had the Food and Drug Administration. I also had, as part of the district, I had some farming community—what was left of the farming community—which made it very interesting. I also believe many of the members of the press lived in Montgomery County.

And so it was diverse, but it was a rather, in a way, affluent. You had your spots, your certain areas. When you had a "Don't build it in my neighborhood" crusade, you had the lawyers who lived there who were going to do it pro bono {laughter}. And so you had a very attentive district. When I would do a town meeting, they understood something about foreign policy. What they didn't understand is what most districts in the country don't, and that is how little money we put into foreign assistance. They always think, "Oh, you must be putting 25 percent, or 15 percent, into it. We should cut back on that part of the budget." They don't realize that it's like one percent and less than that. So very, very intelligent, diverse to a degree.

But I must say also, it was kind of a composite. I didn't need five district offices because I could drive around my district in about an hour and a half. When you look at the composition of districts in other parts of the country, you find somewhere there are 23 counties in one district in which case you may never get to see the people in the far reaches of that district.

Living in the district I represented, I had to be every place because there was no excuse. I couldn't say, "I can't get out there, the travel is too far because I have an appointment in Washington," or "I must stay in one area of Washington." I had to be there. It was like Charlie Cook of the Cook Report said, "That Morella, she knows her district. She will go to the opening of an

envelope," and that says something also about a competitive district. You go to a lot of envelope openings.

JOHNSON: Did you enjoy that part of the job?

MORELLA: I did, I did. I now recognize that is nice on the Fourth of July to not have to get up at 6:00 in the morning to go to five parades and other meetings and end up with fireworks late at night. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Earlier you had mentioned your first service, when you were in the general assembly, when you were in the Maryland general assembly. What about that experience do you think was most helpful to your later service in the House?

MORELLA: There are great similarities, such as legislative procedures and responding to constituents with little staff. I realize, of course, in the Constitution, that those powers that are not given to the executive, and the legislative, and judicial branches go to the state. It is mandated federalism. I see states as great opportunities for commencing some new initiatives and trying them out, demonstration programs. I see states as a great opportunity for doing that.

There's something the federal government doesn't do that the state government does, and of course, numbers, I guess, kind of prevent the federal government from doing it. And that is in the Maryland legislature, as in most legislatures, the House met in the morning, everybody's there. In the afternoon they had their committees. In the Senate, it was just the opposite. Senate would have their meetings in the morning and they would then be in session in the afternoon. That meant everybody was there at one time. And you did not have an empty chamber, they were there. It also meant you had fewer committees. You didn't have all the subcommittees like Congress has. And I realize that it can't be done exactly that way, but I think we could look

a little closer at maybe reducing the number of committees, maybe trying to get people on the House Floor by virtue of protocol. So that was one process to know everybody. Right now in Congress, many Members don't even know their colleagues. They never see them. They never work with them. Maybe on a committee level, but then they're dashing to go to another committee, in the middle of one meeting.

But it was interesting. I lament the fact that I am the only woman who served in the Maryland legislature who went onto Congress. Why do I lament? Because what happened in the meantime, they're serving in the state legislature, why are they not running? And that gets to the point of the fact that we need to encourage women more, to get out there early, to run for it, and not feel that they don't have the experience, or they don't have the money, and not to feel that this already is a seat that is being held for one of the guys. It's been a very disturbing phenomenon.

JOHNSON: One of the main things we want to talk about today, of course, are your experiences as a woman in the U.S. House. And when you first came to Congress there weren't many women. You were one of 24 that first Congress. Did you find since there were so few of you that you tended to gravitate towards each other?

MORELLA: I've always been one that liked the idea of grouping together whenever you can for major support. And in the state legislature also, we had our little women's caucus. And so we got a number of things done because of that. We had some of the same feelings that women were still in the minority and so we would caucus about some issues, not as much as in the federal legislature. And I think the idea that there were only 24 on the House side and only two on the Senate side made the importance of a caucus even more emphatic.

And as a matter of fact, it's interesting because we have that little Congresswomen's Room, which is the room where John Quincy Adams, sixth President, died on the sofa in that room. And there is a bust of him in the room, "Herein dieth. Last breath cast. {laughter} John Quincy Adams." And I remember 1991, when Lindy [Corinne Claiborne] Boggs . . . we named the room for her. And so she spoke there and she looked up at the statue of John Quincy Adams and she said, "Well, John," she said. "Now your father never listened to your mother Abigail when she said, 'Remember the ladies.' But now I think she might find some comfort in knowing that you live here in this room surrounded by strong women." And I always thought "Sweet Lindy," {laughter} and what she said and what the whole thing meant and sort of symbolized.

But, yes, it became a room where we could meet and just plain relax. And it even had a couple of little beds where if there was an overnighter, someone could come and rest for a while. But we also did some strategizing. And when women came out of that room to Statuary Hall and if you had maybe three of them coming out at one time, the guys around would say, "Well, what are they cooking up? What have they just decided to do?" So it became a pretty good symbol. And yes, there were issues we disagreed with, in terms of pro-life issues. We just didn't discuss them. Those were done at other caucuses, separate caucuses. So I think getting together, particularly if you're in the minority, is very helpful.

JOHNSON: And for some of those issues, though, you crossed party lines. You were working together, Democrats and Republican women together.

MORELLA: Oh, yes, right, right. For many of them, we were. Well, let's say the Violence Against Women Act. And as I say, when I began to look at some of the accomplishments I think of Family and Medical Leave. I got on that bill as

soon as I was elected, but it had been previously introduced by Pat [Patricia Scott] Schroeder. And that was finally signed into law. Now we need to go into paid, {laughter} some paid leave, since we're one of just a handful of countries that doesn't offer something.

And then I think of the Office of Research on Women's Health, that was truly a coming together of two parties in two chambers because there were four of us who were involved in the issue. On the Senate side, it was Olympia [Jean] Snowe and Barbara [Ann] Mikulski, and on the House side, Pat Schroeder and myself. And it was a report that had been done that demonstrated that women were not being included in clinical trials and protocols—also weren't being elevated, promoted either. And so we met, the four of us met with, at NIH, the then-acting director of the National Institutes of Health about that issue. He had prepared around the table the institute directors of all of the 24 institutes they have, and they each had two packets. One was, "This is what we've done for women," and the other one was, "This is what we're going to do for women." And that was all good except you had to have legislation {laughter} to make sure it's going to happen. So in the NIH Revitalization Act, we put in the requirement that there be an Office of Research on Women's Health. It is still, it's now like 20-plus years later. It's still being looked on as what needs to be done and has been done, but needs to be done even more.

I was at the Brigham and Women's Health event this last year, looking at that piece of legislation and analyzing the benefits, many benefits. Women and autoimmune disease—the number one killer of women is heart attacks—lung cancers, the primary cancer; women and HIV/AIDS, an area I also got very much involved in. Progress has been made but they're not doing as much research with women as they should. They still are not using a lot of

the female animals for research. We used to kid and say, "Yes, they even use male rats for the research, but now we're making them use female rats, also." {laughter} But quite seriously, they were pretty limp in terms of what they were continuing to do in that area, so we're to push for more inclusion.

There are many other pieces of legislation. I sponsored a commission for the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering and Technology. What was interesting about that commission—as an aside on how things happen—it passed the House, it was over in the Senate and then it somehow disappeared. And I said, "Well, whatever happened to that legislation?" And it was, "Oh well, the Senate has a rule that somebody can pull it." One of the Members can anonymously pull it and that's what had happened. And I found out who it was. I couldn't reach him, he was back in his state and the session was over. I introduced it in the next session and it passed. He's since died. {laughter} But it was interesting how the connection with regard to some rules that the Senate has and the rules that the House has, that they're not synchronized necessarily, they're individual. I don't know if a guy had introduced it, whether it would have passed—maybe not, maybe not.

But there were many other successes. Women in non-traditional occupations was another bill I introduced that did become law. The Violence Against Women Act was the biggie. That was a biggie. That was a real landmark in 1994. Got to give some credit to Joe [Joseph Robinette] Biden, [Jr.] over on the Senate side. Joe Biden really cared about that. And I must say, Orrin [Grant] Hatch came over to the House side to talk to the Republicans, to say, "Hey guys, you really should pass this; this is a good thing." And so obviously women alone don't have enough votes to pass legislation, so what you do, you do that kind of outreach, just like you do in a good campaign and you

explain to people—the males particularly—how it's going to help them with their constituents. And then you get the groups out there. The NGOs [non-governmental organizations] and all to play their part, to get letters written to their Members of Congress and get the business community involved and get the medical community involved.

And that's exactly what happened with the Violence Against Women Act. So when that passed, it was to be every five years reauthorized. And so in 2000, I was the prime sponsor of the bill. It became part of the human trafficking bill and so you had that combination. As a result, from 2000 we've had a report on human trafficking every year, with the various countries. And that's, that's made a big difference. And now they're looking, looking to an international Violence Against Women Act. And eventually that will happen. So there are many, many accomplishments.

Also, in terms of foreign affairs, women have played some major roles—major roles also to caucuses, so many caucuses, a caucus on everything. Whether it was against apartheid and whether it was for Sri Lanka, individual freedoms, the caucuses, many of them have made a difference. Some of them are just in name, but many of them have played significant roles.

WASNIEWSKI: We're going to ask some questions about some legislation specifically in a minute, but we wanted to back you up for just a second and talk about when you came into the 100th Congress in '87 there were a handful of other freshman women: Louise [McIntosh] Slaughter, Nancy Pelosi was elected in the special election, Patricia Saiki from Hawaii, Elizabeth [J.] Patterson—we're curious, did a special bond emerge between that group?

MORELLA: Yes. Yes. A special bond. With the women in that group, Pat Saiki and I became good friends. Liz Patterson, I heard she's not doing too well because

I've been sort of in touch with her through others. Nancy Pelosi and my gal from New York, Louise Slaughter, we're still very good friends. She and Nancy, Nancy Pelosi, are the last two {laughter} from that class. But we developed a special bond because we were females in a minority. But I want you to know that in the 100th Congress you still call these people your classmates. I'm going to introduce Amo [Amory] Houghton, [Jr.] tomorrow at an event. Well, Amo was my buddy in my class. John [R.] Lewis was in my class. They still become your classmates. Interesting kind of bond from that, too.

WASNIEWSKI: How would you describe the atmosphere of the House when you were elected? Was it a welcoming environment for women legislators?

MORELLA: It was welcoming in that when I think about the women who were there, they were kind of simpatico and they all had worked hard to get there, different backgrounds and whatever. But Pat Schroeder was part of it, Nancy [Lee] Johnson, Claudine Schneider. I can go through a group of women I felt very comfortable with, including Marge [Margaret Scafati] Roukema, who recently passed away. Despite differences, we respected each other and we all got along exceedingly well. Yes, I don't know what it's like now. {laughter}

I know that my former legislative director, Cindy Hall, formed the Women's Policy, Inc., that brings together the women in the House and in the Senate, but it's mostly in the House and they have different committees. In fact, today they have a luncheon on the Hill, which is dealing with women in the military, the medical facet of it. Oh no, it deals with women and athletics, women seriously hurt in athletics. I brought that up only to say that yes, there is the foundation that Cindy Hall has, which does bring in women, both sides of the aisle, definitely. And every committee they have and every subcommittee is chaired by a Democrat and a Republican.

WASNIEWSKI: How about the larger institution, aside from women, how welcoming was that toward the women legislators and were there any parts of it that were harder for you as a women to become part of?

MORELLA: Well, I think some of it, some of the feeling I had then probably still prevails. And that is in a, let's say in a committee room it would be in response to something and maybe I'd make a comment, or another woman would make a comment, and the chairman would say, "That's very good, thank you very much and so now we'll turn to 'so and so.'" And then after the third person, a male makes the same thing, same comment you made and it was, "That is brilliant, Congressman Jones. Let the record show." But so what am I saying? I'm saying that I think women still have to work a little harder to be taken seriously. But then the old Ginger Rogers in high heels dancing backwards and women have been able to handle that.

JOHNSON: For the physical space in the Capitol, were there any rooms that were difficult to access? Or any areas of the Capitol because you were a woman Member?

MORELLA: When you are a Member?

JOHNSON: When you first started in the 1980s, were there still . . .

MORELLA: Oh well, there were certain private rooms that some of the chairmen of the major committees had. You did not transgress into those rooms without permission—you knew they had private rooms. Other than that, no, I don't, can't think of any. Well, the gym, at first, until we made that coed.

JOHNSON: What about the cloakrooms? Did you spend a lot of time in the cloakroom and what was that like for you?

MORELLA: Yes, the cloakroom, it was a very comfortable place, quite frankly. At first there used to be lot of smoke in it, but then {laughter} when they changed that rule. You could find a corner there and just do your own thing and {laughter} kind of listen to the conversations {laughter} taking place, which gave you some idea of what was happening athletically, or somebody didn't do something they should have and you hear, "a dumb idiot," or whatever. And you could listen to that, or you could engage in a conversation, or you could read. They were comfortable places and, I think, on both aisles.

JOHNSON: Do you think that was an area where Congressmen and Congresswomen could get together because it was more relaxed?

MORELLA: It really wasn't that much of a get together place. Some of the guys might, but it was more like I got the sofa and I'm going to sleep on it. {laughter} Thinking it, yes, it was more sort of casually social, but not really, not a strategic place. Maybe, you'd get off the floor to talk about one thing, but no, basically strategy was really not conducted there. But they probably had other private rooms.

JOHNSON: Were there any other places that you found that you could discuss strategy or you could kind of make connections with other Members?

MORELLA: Well, that was where the women's room was used in the Capitol. And it was just a great place for us to even get coffee and really relax and discuss things. Or there might have been a committee room, not the committee room itself, but kind of the anteroom of one of the committees. And so we could always meet there and discuss, particularly if there are issues that related to the work in that committee, or that it was close by.

WASNIEWSKI: You've touched on this in a few of answers, but what do you think the role was that the Women's Caucus generally played in the institution? How significant was it?

MORELLA: Well, I think women, I feel women have a special responsibility. All Members of Congress have the responsibility to all their constituents. But if there are issues that particularly affect women and their role in society, ergo also families, I think there's a responsibility. I'm going to care about my science and my constituencies that are involved in the biomedical field, and whatever, and my federal employees, but if there are some issues that deal with like family and medical leave, educational opportunities, particularly for women, credit opportunities for women, then I feel I should speak out and I feel that I should try to garner support among the other women.

When you think about it, look at violence against women. Violence against women early on was considered that dirty little secret hidden under the rug. Nobody wanted to touch it. I'll give you an interesting story. Who was the woman who lost her election? Coya [Gjesdal] Knutson, thank you. Coya Knutson who was a Democrat and she ran for office and won. She'd been in the state legislature, ran for office, and won in two elections. The third time she ran her husband wrote a letter: "Due to wifely neglect, my family life has deteriorated to the point where it is nonexistent." That was printed in the Fargo [North Dakota] newspaper, picked up by the Associated Press, spread, just like social media spreads now. She lost that election, even though her party won the other seats. She ran again; she lost. She got a divorce, of course; he was a drunk. But later on, she never could regain office and that was because of the stereotypic concept that a woman needed to take care of her husband and her family.

She later got a civil service job. She died about 15 years ago, and I remember reading an editorial in the *Washington Post* about her. They had interviewed her after she had lost and then was in the civil service, and she said that she had suffered from domestic violence. That guy, her husband, had violated her, I don't know, had beaten her or whatever, but domestic violence. And so the *Post* reporter said, "Well, why didn't you let people know that?" And her answer was what was so typical of the '50s and that is, "Oh, but it was a domestic private matter, it was not for me to tell outside the home." So the concept was that this was hidden because this was domestic and that's a terrible word for it anyway. Maybe "family violence" is better or something else. But I never forgot that, that she just, she wouldn't even as a Member of Congress even let people know that she was a victim of domestic violence.

So that was an issue where we had to bring it out and we had to spread the word. And it finally happened. I'm sure there are a lot of other issues, too, where people feel they have to take leadership because of who they are, and where they are, and what they believe.

JOHNSON: From what you're saying, did you have a belief then that you weren't just representing your constituents and just women in your district, but women across the country? Did you feel that was part of your responsibility?

MORELLA: Oh, yes. I felt it's going to help women in my, yes, right, throughout the country. Absolutely. We made a lot of significant changes, changes in attitude, is another part, too. But I think coming together is very helpful. It builds strength—alliances, friendships. I believe that what one needs is, in running for office and being in office, a purpose, a passion, perseverance, and patience. Maybe you make progress. But I think coming together is very important.

WASNIEWSKI: You talk about taking a leadership role and the [Women's] Caucus was unique. It has a Democratic co-chair, Republican co-chair and you co-chaired for a Congress. What did that leadership role mean for you? That experience.

MORELLA: You rise with the occasion. You have a further responsibility, a responsibility for making sure it's going to work and making sure that your various subcommittees have whatever they need. So you just assume that role by adding to your sense of obligation as well as belief.

JOHNSON: When you co-chaired the Women's Caucus, who was your co-chair? Who did you work with on the other side? Do you remember?

MORELLA: Yes, I do, because she's still there now, Nita [M.] Lowey. Nita and I are still buddies, exactly. And she will always say that whenever she speaks somewhere, oh, yes. Actually, and that was also at a very critical time. That was when we suddenly had the shift. See, I spent eight years as a minority in the minority. And I spent eight years as a minority in the majority. {laughter} And so I have that unique distinction. And when Speaker [Newton Leroy] Gingrich abolished the caucuses and it was like, "Yes, but the Women's Caucus is working well and financially there's . . ." And the answer was, "I know that. But we can't just single out one or two caucuses." So the Black Caucus formed a foundation and the Women's Caucus did, too. So that's why you've got Women's Policy, Inc. And Nita and I were the co-chairs at that very critical time. But actually it's turned out fine, it's working very well. But that was one of the changes.

JOHNSON: Before we move onto some questions about your committee service, we wanted to ask about any mentors, any women mentors that you might have had when you first came to Congress, someone that showed you the ropes.

MORELLA: Yes, Olympia Snow is really great. Nancy Landon Kassebaum was terrific. Nancy Johnson was good, and Marge Roukema, too, and Claudine Schneider. Yes, I had a lot of good friends. And they were all open to giving suggestions, pretty much when I asked. As I say, Olympia Snowe, particularly, was very helpful to me. And we became very good friends. And Nancy Kassebaum, same thing—wonderful woman.

JOHNSON: What kind of advice did they offer you? Do you remember any specific examples about maybe committee assignments or other issues?

MORELLA: Really just mostly on the atmosphere, and the demeanor of the situation, and sometimes on some of the issues. But really mostly like problems in navigating and so not so much issue involved, more demeanor, more atmosphere. "You should expect this or don't expect that." Sometimes about personalities.

JOHNSON: How did you obtain your initial committee assignments? Is that something that you requested, to serve on those two committees?

MORELLA: I did. Of course, originally I said I wanted Appropriations, {laughter} and then I thought, well, I want something that's going to help my constituency. And so again, I was advised, "You've got a lot of federal employees and they also deal with high-tech in all the areas and so you should do something that's connected with the federal employees." So I did like that assignment. And the Science assignment worked out well for me, too. It's interesting because later I did say something about, "Well now, I think I would like to go to Appropriations." You know the answer I got? "Connie, we want you to continue to get elected because you're doing such a great job. If you were on Appropriations you'd have to make some really tough decisions that would anger your constituency." That was a copout, but it was . . . the concept was

that I would have to vote with my party and not break lines. And so that was what that was, and so I thought, "Okay, I'll fight it in my own way."

JOHNSON: And who said that? Who said that to you?

MORELLA: It was one of the leaders. But that worked out fine because I could still get, I could still get what I wanted into Appropriations through hard work. And it is true, I wouldn't have to vote against them in many instances if I wanted to, {laughter} I suppose. But it indicated the fact that what they really hoped that somebody in a party would vote with their party on everything.

JOHNSON: We've talked about, a few times throughout the interview, how you were one of the few women to serve in the House and also on your committees. You were one of the few women on Post Office and Civil Service Committee—there were only a handful of women at the time. Did you find that you worked together, the women that were on the committee, did you find ways to work together?

MORELLA: Oh yes, yes. I always had believed the sisterhood is powerful and sometimes people, some women don't understand they're sisters, but you have to show them they are. {laughter} I just think showing the bond of friendship and understanding. It helps with men, too, but I think with women, if you're in a minority, is particularly helpful.

JOHNSON: And how important do you think it is and was back then to have a women's perspective on the committees on which you served?

MORELLA: Critically important, critically important. The male Members may agree with you, but they're not going to bring it up. There are certain things that it behooves a woman to perhaps be a leader, at least in terms of how it's perceived—the woman to be the leader, and introduce it, and then help to

garner support. But to have, the male may think, no reason for me to introduce it, I'll wait for somebody else to do it and then maybe I'll support it. I just think you can't be blinded to the inequities going on around you if you're serving your country. And so therefore it is important to try to remedy them and give equal opportunity, not only to women, but to give it to young people in certain areas who don't have certain advantages, who don't have the educational opportunities.

WASNIEWSKI: The Science, Space and Technology Committee was much larger than the Post Office assignment and your first few terms, again, you were one of just three women on the committee.

MORELLA: My first year I was the ranking Member on the Census Subcommittee.

WASNIEWSKI: Claudine Schneider and Marilyn [Laird] Lloyd were on that committee with you. Can you describe the experience on that committee, the welcome that you received?

MORELLA: On?

WASNIEWSKI: On the Science Committee.

MORELLA: On the Science Committee? Well, actually I must say, we always had good chairmen. In terms of opening it up to everybody and it was kind of like, it was sort of like whatever it is that you really want to do, if you do the hard work for it, again, you can't just be there in name, you have to be willing to work for it. If you're willing to work for it then you got, you got some opportunities. [Frank James] Sensenbrenner, [Jr.] was hilarious, though, as a chairman because he'd cut you off if you went beyond a couple of minutes, {laughter} whether you were the gentlewoman from Maryland or you were the guy from Alabama. {laughter} He didn't discriminate. So you had

different styles that your chairmen had and the way the committee was handled, at least in terms of testimony, it depended pretty much upon the chairmen. They had their own personalities.

But the subcommittees were also very interesting and when I became in the majority party, then I was able to take on the chairmanship of the Technology Subcommittee and then eventually D.C., District of Columbia Committee. These might not have interested somebody from Georgia or from Montana, but for me these were important committees, frankly. District of Columbia's part of the metropolitan, we're part of the metropolitan Washington area. And NIST, I was the hero of NIST. {laughter}

When I left they did a party for me and one of the things, they did give me some plaques and stuff. One of the things they gave me was a tree. It was a part of a tree that had—was an apple tree—and supposedly Newton, {laughter} the Newton's apple, {laughter} actually the apple didn't hit him on the head. Newton saw the apple fall and so that gave him the concept {laughter} of gravity. "What do I do with this?" "You can do whatever you want." I thought, what I did do is Poolesville, Poolesville High School, which is now a magnet school, had a science program, science environmental program, and so on Earth Day I gave them the tree and they planted it there and we did an event.

But I was very proud of NIST. In fact, I think it was my, maybe my second term or the end of my first term, we even renamed it. It used to be the Bureau of Standards and we renamed it National Institute of Standards and Technology. In fact, there was a question of do we then call it the National Institute of Technology and Standards? That was vetoed. Why? Because we're in an acronymous society and it would have been NITS. {laughter} And

then the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Awards, now he had been the Secretary of Commerce. And then, {laughter} I chaired the House Y2K Committee. {laughter} And that was, that was quite an interesting, I would say responsibility and opportunity, too. We got the business community together and actually it never happened, but it was the best example of the business community working with government that we have ever had. And secondly, it got a lot of places like the District of Columbia to upgrade and change their technology equipment, their computers and all. Y2K.

WASNIEWSKI: As chair of the Technology Subcommittee, how would you describe your leadership style?

MORELLA: My leadership style? Oh, I'm a good leader. {laughter} Now actually it's recognizing people. Recognizing them and letting them know that they can do something and listening to their ideas, even if you disagreed with them. You listen, and then you help to change it around. I think it's something that we tend to, again, we stereotype, but we tend to think that women are more open to listening and I think that's true. I think that's true.

Now when it came to Lehman Brothers—that big fiasco in 2008—when you looked at the composition of those high-tech, those companies, financial companies, you found you didn't have any women in leadership. And there are those who said Lehman Brothers, had it been Lehman Sisters, it would have made a difference. But I submit that's not the case. I submit that what is important is that you have both. And both why? I'd say men are more prone to risks. "Yes, we just go do it." And women would say, "No, no, no, no, let's be a little more conservative and look at it closer." You need both. You can't have one and not the other. So that's kind of been my plate, my hope, is that there just be those who can do it best are there, but opportunities open to

both and we look for kind of equality. So I think as a leader, I think women do very well, generally. Some don't. Some men don't.

JOHNSON: There were some women in leadership, while you were in the House—Nancy Pelosi, Deborah [D.] Pryce. What did you think of their leadership style and the importance of them as being leaders?

MORELLA: I think they're very important. It's like Geraldine [Anne] Ferraro said of Bella [Savitsky] Abzug, {laughter} "She didn't knock at the door to open it for women, she didn't bang it, she didn't blow it up. She took it off its hinges so it would be forever open for women." And so I see that with women in leadership. I see when you've opened that door and taken it off its hinges then others can walk in. And then you think of ability, you don't think about, "Oh yes, the first woman to do this" or "We don't have a woman."

I think it's very interesting to look at the role of women in other countries, too. In Norway for a number of years they've had that 40 percent of women on boards, public boards, governmental boards and it seems to be working. Now Germany is going to adopt 30 percent. And again, it won't mean anything after a while if you have the women on the boards, then you won't have to do what we do now and that is we look at our annual reports from companies. You look at the board of directors and you'll find two women. One probably is the widow {laughter} of somebody who was on it, and that just won't be the case. You just assume it's going to be open to all.

JOHNSON: As I mentioned to you earlier, when we started this project, and the whole idea was to remember and think about 100 years ago when Jeannette Rankin was elected to Congress. A lot of attention was paid to her dress, her demeanor, everything about her because it was so novel. She was the first woman elected. Did you find when you came to the House in the late 1980s

that there still was a lot of attention paid to things like that, to how you dressed, to how you spoke—things that maybe male Members didn't have to worry about?

MORELLA: That would be the press that would pay attention to it. It isn't the colleagues, your colleagues, male or a female, would necessarily say except, "I think that's a great color," or something like that. But it was the press that would describe women in terms of what they, the way they dressed. And I think it was Pat Schroeder who started out wearing pants [and] Bella Abzug who had the hat.

Incidentally, Jeannette Rankin once said, she said, "If I am remembered for nothing else, I want to be remembered as the first woman who voted for women to vote." The first woman who voted for women to vote and it's really true. I find there's still a propensity to discuss sort of what women are wearing or how they look, but I'm seeing it more about men now. Now you look at men wearing baggy pants or the same suit he wore before, so I'm finding more equity {laughter} in looking at that, and that's good, that's good.

JOHNSON: And with the press, since you brought that up, what were some of the questions that were asked of you—any questions that really stand out in your mind as a woman Member? Either funny, humorous, annoying just something because you were a woman, because of your gender.

MORELLA: Well, in terms of, of what they might ask, yes, okay. My last chief of staff—Bill Miller, who's now at Business Roundtable—I remember shortly before I left, he was very upset because the press had called him and they wanted to know what kind of shoes I wore. And he couldn't understand that. So I said, "Well, what did you say?" "I said they were sturdy and stylish." I said, "Great, {laughter} that was a good answer." But imagine calling and asking

him what kind of shoes does the Congresswoman wear? So I guess that would be one of the silly things. I don't know. Maybe things they might ask about family or certain things they might ask me they might not ask a male. I don't, I can't think of anything that would, stands out in my mind as being unusual, exorbitant.

WASNIEWSKI: Are there any women staff, either from your office or from another part of the House, that you recall that stand out in your mind, and if so, what made them memorable?

MORELLA: Well, in my own office, for a while I also had chief of staff who's now in Florida playing golf, a woman, who was great. And my legislative director, as I mentioned, was a woman, and I had some other key staff, key staff who are women, who are very reliable, really great. One woman would, she would do a lot of speaking things because she belonged to a lot of clubs on her own and we always were concerned because when she'd come back in the office it would be as bad as when I went out. She'd come back with all these notes to do things for people. {laughter} "'So and so' wanted this done, 'So and so' wanted this done." You'd say, "Please, maybe you should restrict where you go." {laughter} No, I found them all to be very strong and very helpful.

As a matter of fact, I had the unique privilege of having a nun on my staff. She had done some work on my campaign and then she was interested and she did. I can tell you she did not handle the social issues. She handled veterans' affairs and housing, {laughter} and she was just terrific. She's now in Pennsylvania with her order and she's in charge of the university they have there. But I remember, on top of me in my first office in Longworth was Pete [Fortney Hillman] Stark, [Jr.]. Pete Stark had a nun working in his office, who was a friend of the nun in my office. And I remember one day, speaking to the woman in my office, a young man who worked for me said, "Well," he

said. "Helen," he said, "Nun of the above was down to see you." {laughter} But most people didn't know that. That's why I found strong women.

JOHNSON: How would you describe the role that women played in Congress?

MORELLA: I think first of all, the fact that they got there said something about their character, and their determination, and their passion because for none of them it was an easy road. It's not easy for men, but it's certainly not easy for women. It's difficult for a woman to be understanding, to be a good listener, and yet to be considered strong and willing to take the initiative on issues. They don't seem to be compatible, whereas of course, they are compatible. So I think the fact that she got there to begin with was an interesting story and an interesting path. And so, therefore, I found them all to be very responsive to their constituents. I found them to be very considerate of their colleagues. They may have been angry at some of the colleagues, but I never heard any really terrible threats. So I think they were good leaders. I think they were good leaders and I think they represented their districts well.

JOHNSON: And we asked you about the Women's Caucus, but were there any other groups or activities, dinners, something a little bit less formal that you had the chance to get other women Members?

MORELLA: Well, I think a lot of it occurred with the caucuses that we had. We would have, there could be a caucus on almost anything and that sometimes you'd meet with them separately. We would very often, a group of us, particularly if we were interested in a certain issue, continue with the discussion like over lunch and maybe go to the Capitol Hill Club, or maybe the dining room here or sometimes we'd have evening engagements, but it was just very difficult because I had to go home almost every night. I was going to go home every night at certain times, but we would have some dinners. We had

dinners here on the Hill and would sometimes meet with the women. Traditionally it was on an issue. Sometimes it was just unwinding.

WASNIEWSKI: There are now 108 women in Congress, there's 88 in the House, there's 20 in the Senate. How many do you think we're going to have in Congress when we hit the 150th anniversary of Jeannette Rankin's swearing in?

MORELLA: {laughter} I would like to see 50 percent, but even if it were 40 percent I would be happy, {laughter} I think that would be great. Yes, I think we need to . . . I remember in the "Year of the Woman" was 1992.[1] And that was where everybody thought, oh boy, we are moving in the right direction with newly elected 24 new ones on top of what they had. That was pretty incredible. And yet somehow it plateaued. {laughter} Even went down a bit, now coming up a little bit, too. I also have a little personal concern about the fact that two-thirds of the women serve are Democrats and one-third Republican. So it's saying something to a political party that, "Hey, you can't neglect 52 percent of the population. You'd better try to do something to get them more involved, encourage them to run, and to give them support. Maybe even look at the issues you're dealing with." {laughter}

WASNIEWSKI: That kind of leads into my next question, which is if we're going to get that kind of increase, how is that going to come about? What do you think the most important thing is going to be to make that happen?

MORELLA: I think we have to inspire women to want to run. A new book has just come out—I'm going to be going to the launching of it next week—about why young people don't want to run.[2] Nobody wants to run. And we already knew women weren't running. But now if even all the young people aren't going to want to run, so I think we have a job to promote public service, to

promote the institution, the first article in our Constitution is the legislative branch, how important it is.

I've mentioned the fact that back in the early '70s a woman couldn't get a credit card without a man signing for her. But it took a law to change that. The Equal Credit Act, to change it. So it's taken laws along the way to change some of the things that we'd just been accepting without bothering to change. So there is an importance of that legislative branch of government and we have to inspire.

Sandy Day O'Connor has her foundation dealing with civics education, the concept being to get people more involved and in getting them more involved to get them to want to be the leaders to make those decisions.

Unfortunately, the concept of money—you mentioned money, raising money—now it's even up to these unknown entities, these super PACs [political action committees], to begin to flood money into campaigns. That is debilitating to the concept of running for office. And then, of course, you have safe districts, somebody who's been there for a long time and a certain party. But the lack of encouragement, the lack of concept of the importance of public service and that you play a role, and that you can make it work and supporting these people, I think is important. And the press plays a role, too.

And remember, this whole thing, since I've been in Congress, social media has become so influential, in terms of how people think and then also maybe how they act. And so I think we need to get a handle on all of those things and we can do it.

JOHNSON: Matt and I had asked you before about people that may have served as a mentor for you when you first came to Congress. But on the flip side of that,

did you ever serve as a mentor for someone else, other women Members or staff?

MORELLA: Oh, I hope so. Yes, I certainly, I certainly tried, I certainly tried to encourage other women also in terms of what they wanted to pursue. But you mean even outside of Congress?

JOHNSON: Yes.

MORELLA: I think my mere presence, talking to young women, being involved with young women, I've become a mentor to a number of them. And sometimes they've even come back and said, "You did inspire me to try something and I lost something but I went back again and did it and I'm glad that you said that." But I think you need even more than mentoring. They need also to help, even beyond the mentoring. And so I try to do it when I can. I think, who was it? I got an award a couple of years ago, foremother {laughter}, the foremother award. I hardly think I'm a foremother—maybe a little bit. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Was there anything that was unexpected or anything that really surprised you from your time in Congress that you weren't prepared for?

MORELLA: I had a unique role in Congress. I was able to do a lot for my federal employees, even frequent flier miles and salaries and all of that. For my high-tech community, able to do a lot, whether it was a chemistry building, looking after the world trade, getting NIST involved with that, technology transfer. But I think about some of the issues where I was really a minority and spoke out and one was impeachment, the impeachment. I think I was one of five Republicans who voted against all four articles of impeachment and frankly it wasn't that the President [Clinton] was innocent; he was perjurious. But I felt it didn't imperil the nation, so we needed to move on.

The other one was the Iraq War. And again I was one of maybe five Republicans who voted against it, maybe for different reasons. And so I guess I want to say . . . and then when Speaker Gingrich became Speaker, that election was one that was the "Contract with America." Remember that? Was highly used in an inflammatory fashion saying, "It's a contract against America," or whatever. I voted for it. I was very reluctant about voting for it and the reason I voted for the "Contract with America" is that there were 10 issues and all it said—and people didn't understand this—was that these issues would come before the House to be voted on, to be voted on, not that they had to pass. And when I thought about coming here with you, I remembered, I voted against seven of the 10, but I voted to allow them to come out on the floor and people didn't know that. "So what am I saying?" I'm saying that I really was an out-of-the-box minority, in so many ways.

JOHNSON: Did you receive any pressure from the leadership to vote for things like that?

MORELLA: Of course. I did.

JOHNSON: So how did you respond to that?

MORELLA: I would just simply tell them that I did what was in the best interests of my country, my constituents, and my conscience. And it was interesting. I know that a number of them were very disturbed or upset or, "We can't count on Morella's vote," kind of thing. Nevertheless, nobody was ever really nasty to me. I think it was because it was hard for them {laughter} to be nasty to me. Had it been a guy they would have been swearing and banging at each other. They all kind of respected me or, "She's different," or "That's her district." I would hear that sometimes.

When we had the government shutdown—interestingly because I was obviously against the first government shutdown, which went on and on

because of the weather, too—I remember getting a call from Senator [Robert Joseph] Dole and so I scurried down to see him on a Sunday because he wanted to try to help me to work out something to get Congress back in session again. And after meeting with him, where he was going to do something on the Senate side, I went over to see Dick [Richard Keith] Armey, and that was just the opposite. {laughter} It was just the opposite. Dick Armey, "Well, I got to tell you, Connie, it was my district that elected me and this is what my district feels about it," kind of thing. But it was beyond that. And that's what happens sometimes with safe districts, both parties. They don't think for the country. It's like, "Who was voting in my primary?" kind of thing, so that meeting with Dick Armey wasn't constructive. We didn't throw things at each other; we just disagreed. So I never had trouble with getting along with actually any of the Members of Congress.

WASNIEWSKI: The time period you're describing . . . I mean, the House has always been a partisan place. . .

MORELLA: Sure, sure.

WASNIEWSKI: But the time period you're describing, it really became polarized and has remained polarized and I'm just wondering if we could get your general impressions about that, as you say, "an out-of-the-box Member" in your own party, watching what's happening with both parties in the House.

MORELLA: I know, it's very sad because I'm a political junkie and I love the institution and I'm sorry that the middle has kind of collapsed. We need to kind of rebuild that. I think about when Tom [Thomas Stephen] Foley died and we went to his funeral. And as a matter of fact, he had gone to Bob [Robert Henry] Michel, had a 90th birthday like the year before he died over at the

Capitol Hill Club and Tom Foley showed up in his, he was in a wheelchair at the time, that's right. And at the funeral of Tom Foley in the Capitol, the person who got the standing applause was Bob Michel when he spoke. You had President [Barack] Obama there, you had President Clinton there. Joe Biden was there. All these influential, political leaders and Bob Michel talked about their friendship when Tom Foley was Speaker and Bob Michel was Minority Leader, how they would meet once a week and they would switch offices and they would talk about what's happening, what legislation was coming up, what problems they were going to have. And they didn't always agree or disagree. But they became friends. And then Tom Foley, again, unusual that he got defeated as Speaker of the House, and then Bob Michel, who must have said, "Hey, I've had it, I've been here for so long I'm going to leave." And in giving his farewell address, Tom Foley asks Bob Michel to preside as Speaker of the House. It was a symbol. It was a symbol of the fact that you could be partisan and work together and you could be friends. And you could have differences and you could try to resolve those differences. I always thought of that as a spectacular moment.

And then, {laughter} and then we had, Newt Gingrich became the Speaker and things began to change. Yes, I became chairman of the [sub]committee, yes, there were some benefits of being in the majority, but things sort of became more polarized. And I can't blame it on one person. I can just say the attitude began to become more prevalent, "We're right, they're wrong. They're wrong, we're right" kind of thing. More polarized.

WASNIEWSKI: In that kind of environment, based on your experience, having worked across the aisle, can women play a key role to help bridge that?

MORELLA: Women continue to be primary movers and shakers, again in their way. We saw what happened over in the Senate when you had Susan [Margaret]

Collins, Patty Murray . . . In fact, they do meet. You asked a question about whether we meet and not as often as we would have many conferences, meetings in the Speaker's, rather in the Congresswomen's Room, but they would meet like at least once a month for dinner at somebody's home and you had both parties represented there. And I found that they have been influential. We see it particularly on the Senate side. But on the House side, too, we even had a situation that had to do with one of the bills dealing with abortion that a woman on the Republican side in the House came and stopped and made them change it. Yes, so I think . . . and I think it has to do with, forget all the flamboyance and all that kind of stuff. "Let's just get to it, let's get to the root of it. What is the problem?" And "Can we do something about it?" I think that's the attitude.

JOHNSON: What do you think your lasting legacy will be, as far as your House career is concerned?

MORELLA: For me? I think it's, I think she spoke up, she was undaunted and she spoke up for her constituents, her beliefs, and for her country. And I think the landmark legislation that she was involved in and I certainly would not underestimate the constituent service. The constituent service was extraordinary. I had a staff that knew everything was to be done, turned around, whether it was immigration and we had a chart about what kind of calls we got, what the issues were, district office. I had really, really good staff who were very attentive.

And then I had some great opportunities. And I was thinking again about coming here, I went to the three United Nations conferences—on the environment, on population and development and the women's conference. Then in the Science Committee I even went to Antarctica with the National Science Foundation. And with the Space, I went to Kazakhstan, with the

Space Agency [NASA]. So it's been a full and it's been a great, great opportunity to serve and I have great respect for that first branch of government. And what we can accomplish and how legislation very often is needed to turn things around for the better.

And also know about the diversity of our country, too. When you think about the fact that people from all walks of life, representing all kinds of differences, whether or not it's the moo cow . . . {laughter} Incidentally, in my district you asked me about it, there is now a [King Barn Dairy] MOOseum. They call it the MOOseum, {laughter} in that part that's still agricultural. But such great diversity where you've got doctors, lawyers, funeral directors, like that, psychiatrists, farmers, who are part of that great Congress.

JOHNSON: Was there anything you wanted to add that we haven't asked you today?

MORELLA: I don't know. Just again, I can't help but hope that the political parties will do something with bringing their Members together. That first of all, they would set the tone. The country wants to see us working together. There are many issues where we can do that. Secondly, we are going to be planning events where you'll be required to show up with your family. {laughter} We're going to give you time with your family and time where you get to know each other. Where travel is encouraged, going to other countries to learn something about them. I do some work with the congressional study groups through the Former Members of Congress and sending Members of Congress overseas and involved with study groups. Where for the census, a nonpartisan commission is established in every state, to redistrict and establish district boundaries. And where we have open primaries, {laughter} in every state and maybe where we do something to kind of require or give a reward to people who vote in primaries because that's where they're not

voting, so you get a handful of people, in a safe district, to make the difference.

So if we could do all of those things, and something about the money. I'm involved with Fund for the Republic, they have "Issue One," which is looking at what can be done about money that goes into campaigns and it's particularly looking at a group of former Members to begin with. There are about 150 of us because former Members can speak out clearer. They don't have to worry about raising money for a campaign and they have the experiences. And so I don't know where it's going to lead, except hoping that looking at what some states have already done, that maybe others can do the same thing.

A constitutional amendment would be good, but I don't see that happening. We'll work on all ways. In Congress, a plaque reads, "In this House, the people govern," Alexander Hamilton. And I want it to flourish. I've been privileged to serve in our great Congress.

JOHNSON: Well, thank you so much for coming in to talk with us today.

WASNIEWSKI: Thank you.

MORELLA: You're welcome.

NOTES

[1] The election most closely associated with the moniker "Year of the Woman" was 1992, when 24 new women Members were elected to the House along with three new women Senators.
[2] Reference to the book, Jennifer Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *Running from Office: Why Young Americans Are Turned Off to Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).