

GOP: On the Right Side of History



First Woman to Serve in House and Senate

Margaret Madeline Chase Smith (December 14, 1897 – May 29, 1995) was a United States politician. A member of the Republican Party, she served as a U.S. Representative (1940–49) and a U.S. Senator (1949–73) from Maine. She was the first woman to serve in both houses of the United States Congress, and the first woman to represent Maine in either. A moderate Republican, she was among the first to criticize the tactics of McCarthyism in her 1950 speech, “Declaration of Conscience”.

In response to her speech, McCarthy referred to Smith and the six other Senators as “Snow White and the Six Dwarfs.” He removed her as a member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. McCarthy also helped finance an unsuccessful primary challenger during Smith's re-election campaign in 1954.

Smith later observed, “If I am to be remembered in history, it will not be because of legislative accomplishments, but for an act I took as a legislator in the U.S. Senate when on June 1, 1950, I spoke ... in condemnation of McCarthyism, when the junior Senator from Wisconsin had the Senate paralyzed with fear that he would purge any Senator who disagreed with him.” She voted for McCarthy's censure in 1954.

Smith was a candidate for the Republican nomination in the 1964 presidential election; she was the first woman to be placed in nomination for the presidency at a major party's convention. Upon leaving office, she was the longest-serving female Senator in history, a distinction that was not surpassed until January 5, 2011, when Senator Barbara Mikulski was sworn in for a fifth term. To date, Smith is ranked as the longest-serving Republican woman in the Senate. (Source: Wikipedia)