



## WIG State and Federal Legislators Forum

March 15, 2021

“Women In Government State & Federal Women Legislators Policy Roundtable”

### Featuring:

South Carolina State Representative Heather Crawford, Southern Regional Director, WIG Board of Directors

South Carolina U.S. Representative Nancy Mace

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**Lucy Gettman:** Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to Women In Government’s *State and Federal Legislative Policy Roundtable*. It’s the second of three special programs for Women’s History Month. As you may know, [Women In Government](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization by and for women state legislators. I’m Lucy Gettman, Executive Director and we’re excited to bring you this insightful discussion with one of the newest women members of Congress and about the connections between state and federal legislators. So now I am honored to introduce our moderator today, South Carolina State Representative Heather Crawford, who is also a Southern Regional Director for the national [Women In Government Board of Directors](#). Thank you and welcome, Representative Crawford.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** Thank you Lucy and thank you so much for having us today. Welcome everyone on behalf of the Women In Government Board of Directors. Thank you for joining us. Women In Government has provided leadership opportunities, networking, and policy resources for more than 30 years.

Just a couple of housekeeping items before we get started. We’re delighted to see so many women state legislators and other policy leaders here today. Please take a moment to introduce yourselves in the Chat Box on the zoom toolbar. Let us know who you are and where you’re from by selecting “to everyone” from the drop-down menu. In addition, if you have any questions or comments during this session, please write them in the Chat Box at any time during the program. We are going to have an opportunity at the end to answer some of those questions.

You can stay connected with Women In Government through social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [SoundCloud](#)) and be sure to use these hashtags today. That’s #ConnectingLegislativeLeaders and #WIGcelebratesWHM. We can’t thank our Business Council members enough and our Associate members for their support of Women In Government. Thank you for making this and all of our other WIG events possible. We appreciate you, and thank you.

Now I am pleased to introduce our featured guest, U.S. Representative Nancy Mace. Representative Mace is in her first term as a U.S. Representative and is a former South Carolina State Representative and my friend who I had the pleasure of serving with. You can see her full biography in the Chat Box. Congresswoman Mace and I served in the House together, the South Carolina legislature for three years, and she is now one of 62 women Members of Congress, bringing state legislative experience to the table, and South Carolina’s first Republican woman Member of Congress.



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While we're talking, please be sure to enter any of your questions that you have in the Chat Box. You may also want to select “speaker view” for your view option so you can see us better.

Nancy, welcome. It's so good to see you. Thank you for making history in South Carolina. Thank you for all you're doing. I know you've certainly hit the ground running. We're very proud of you, and while I miss you at Columbia, certainly, I am glad you're there in DC, so thank you for being with us today.

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** Heather, I want to say it's so good to see a familiar face. I love you, and I miss you, and I just - I loved serving with you, and I appreciate your friendship and your support.

And likewise, I'm just as surprised as anybody that I'm a Member of Congress at the age of 43. I didn't think I'd be alive, let alone be here. I know my parents are surprised we won in November, and they learned a lot of tough lessons during some tough times in my life. My life has literally been a series of second chances.

So, when I was 17, I dropped out of high school and I was a waitress at the Waffle House on the side of the interstate in those days. I remember having to stand on a piece of duct tape and yell to the cooks in the back how my customers wanted their hash browns - smothered, covered in chunk, generally speaking. It's still one of my favorite places to get coffee, and in fact, they have K cups now - Waffle House K cups. Who knew that that was even a thing? And it's really good.

But I learned some really tough lessons during some very tough times, like many women who have struggled in their life growing up being a victim, now survivor, of sexual assault, and that was the reason that I dropped out of school. Back in those days in 1995, it was very controversial to be a woman to go to a military college, but a year later in 1996, The Citadel, the military college of South Carolina, decided to let women in.

I had completed my high school diploma by taking college classes at a local college and decided that I would follow in my dad's footsteps at The Citadel. I did it not to be the first woman to do something. Being a feminist isn't something or the way that I would describe myself, although in my legislative career I've worked on a lot of women's issues, but I did it because I had something to prove to myself that I could go to a place and be challenged, that I could face adversity, that I could face an obstacle unlike any other, and that I could achieve, that I could be successful, that I could make something out of my life, and that I wouldn't let someone else who did great harm to me physically and emotionally control me and control my success or control how I felt.

And I learned a couple of lessons at The Citadel that I have felt are invaluable both in business and in state and federal politics. I learned number one about having courage - courage to speak up for myself and also the courage to speak up for others, the courage to speak up, even regardless - and Heather knows this - regardless of the consequences and how valuable that can be particularly when we're legislating or working as lawmakers. Then the second thing I learned about was having confidence, because if we don't believe in ourselves, then no one will believe in us. No one will come to bat for us



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and work with us on different issues or in business, etc. And so, two very important things that that have helped me get to where I am today.

Then third, I would say I sort of on accident discovered politics. I was a young mom, I was pregnant with one kid and I had one already at home and I knew that as a woman, if I stepped out of the workplace to have a job and I stayed home with my kids that I would be penalized when I went back to work. I ended up starting my own company. I worked from home and raised my two kids. I was able to be at home, but also work from home, which was exciting. But, back in those days, you know, I had a technology and marketing company at the time. But I met two people, and I ended up working on their political campaigns. One was Mick Mulvaney, who was running for Congress and he's Trump's former Chief of Staff and former Head of OMB, former Ambassador as well. Then I also met Tim Scott, who at the time was running for Congress, and Tim Scott is now a U.S. Senator here from South Carolina.

They're both very smart and amazing individuals, and I on accident, because I had a technology company, started to do communications and technology work, website building, social media for them when they ran for office, and I said, “This is interesting.” Several years later, I found myself working on a presidential campaign, on Trump's presidential campaign in 2016. I worked all across the country, worked in several different states, and I learned about how you campaign, how you door knock, how you talk to constituents, how you debate, all those things, and what makes us good legislators and lawmakers, how to get into the office.

And of course, as you all know, once you get into office, that's where the work really starts. But I learned that, and then in 2017 won a special election to the State House and joined Heather in the South Carolina Legislature. And in a very short time I worked on a lot of different issues. I learned about again using that lesson I learned at The Citadel about having courage, courage to speak up. I remember one day we were in the State House, and we were debating the fetal heartbeat bill. Not a single woman had stood up to offer any perspective on this particular bill. I just couldn't take it anymore. I said, “I'm not going to sit here and be quiet. I think women should have a voice, and it's important that we have the courage and the confidence to speak up when it's important to us, when it's important to our constituents.”

I don't care what side of the aisle you sit on, Republican or Democrat. You know, oftentimes we sit quietly, and not that we sit on the sidelines, but I don't only want to have a seat at the table. I want to have a voice at the table. That was the day that I told my story about being raped, and it took me 25 years to tell that story.

South Carolina, to this day, is the only state that I'm aware of in the country, and I could be wrong, but when we were going through it a year or two ago, we were the only state at the time in the country that had a fetal heartbeat bill with exceptions for women who've been raped and were victims of incest. You know, I knew at that point my voice mattered, and it mattered to have courage, it mattered to have that confidence, and that's just been extremely important to me. I did that on a couple of different issues, but that one was for me, probably the most nationalized thing.



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When I was running for Congress, in the middle of COVID last year, I passed a prison reform bill. I reached across the aisle to do that. In state politics, generally speaking, at least, and Heather can attest this in the South Carolina Legislature, when you say you're going to work across the aisle, you actually do that. You don't even have to shake hands. At the federal level, it's a little bit different. You might say that in an interview, and then behind the scenes, is totally something completely different. That's something that's different for me that I'm learning.

But one of the values, one of the things that goes back to having courage and having confidence, were after the events of January 6<sup>th</sup>, where our lives, every single member of Congress regardless of your party affiliation, our lives are put in danger, our lives for put at risk.

That particular day, I literally had to walk by two pipe bombs that were planted that day in D.C., one by the DNC, and one by the RNC. I walk by the RNC building to get into my office building every single day. The number of people, not only myself, but whose lives were put in danger that day - I remember being stuck in a tunnel, at one point under The Capitol. I remember reading police reports days later that there were insurrectionists that knew that there were some members of Congress sitting in tunnels under The Capitol, and they were trying to find a way down to find us.

The events of January 6<sup>th</sup>, when there's a challenge and there's a crisis, it's not time to be quiet. It's time to speak up. It's time to be a strong, confident voice. I was a – regardless of the outcome - I was a very strong voice in the days and the weeks following those events. It's important that in crisis we have leadership and support, and that it is not just men in the room - it's women too, that we have a voice, not just a seat at the table, but a voice at the table.

Even when we disagree - it's important that we have these debates and these discussions, that we don't allow the loudest voices to be a vacuum. I know we've all seen it in our state legislatures where there are extreme fringes on both sides of the party, and they hold our political parties hostage, so to speak. That's another reason why it's important for many of us, many women, to speak up and to be those strong voices, and when we are strong and have those voices, we can be much more effective lawmakers and leaders.

The other thing, too, is that it also challenges us to be a good listener to do this job. I'm a mom and I have two kids - I'm a single working mom - but raising two kids has also made me a good listener because before that I had no patience. I didn't want to listen to the other side. Navigating the waters that we have today, I don't know if your state legislature are as divisive as the United States Congress or federal politics are today, but it's extremely divisive right now. I'm not as much of a big ideas person as I am as a small parts make a big difference.

In the few weeks, eight to 10 weeks that I've been in office, I've been trying to make inroads and reach across the aisle and find members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, who are willing to work together. I think going forward at the federal, state, and local level, we have to do a better job. We must do a better job with each other in order to be more successful.



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I look at it as I'm not here to write a book or be on TV every day. I'll do the interviews and everything else, but I was elected by the people, and I have to represent the people. Despite all of the challenges and being a very vocal and loud voice the last couple of weeks, I've also made sure that my staff and my office and my team have kept a focus on my constituents because those are the people that need our help. Whether that's PPP relief, unemployment relief, IRS refunds, whatever that may be, we've made sure through the entirety of my first 8 to 10 weeks in office that everyone gets a call back in 24 hours. You write our office a letter, they get a response in 3.3 days.

When I was a state lawmaker, and Heather, you can probably attest this, but I had interns in the district, and I had an intern in my office, usually from a law school, that would help me respond to this correspondence. I didn't have staff, and South Carolina's legislature wouldn't have staff. At the federal level, we have a budget, and we can hire staff, depending on what we're trying to hire for.

It is a tremendous honor to be here and to serve, and also to share because this is not easy, particularly when you're a woman. Maybe you're juggling a business and work, plus being a state lawmaker and/or family for those that have kids. You know, we have to make big decisions and multitask, and I think we do it better than anyone.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** I am not surprised one bit that you are there. You mentioned that some folks may be surprised. I am not surprised. I am very glad you are there, and I do want to ask you a couple of questions. You have told us about your time in Congress, so far, some of the things that we've seen going on. I'm curious, how has your state legislative experience informed and shaped your work in Congress? How has it helped you being a state legislator and now being in Congress?

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** It's helped me be more bipartisan, quite honestly, and, you know, understanding the procedural motions and rules, how important they are and how to navigate, how can they work, how that works, and how to manage committee work also. For me personally, it's allowed me to be more bipartisan than I probably otherwise would because I have that experience. I understand what it takes to not only draft a bill, and we all know that messaging a bill – they matter, they're important for our constituents, but they don't ever get done. It's finding ways to get things done, and you can only do that when you're reaching across the aisle.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** So, what are some of the ways that we can keep connections between the state and U.S. legislators?

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** Communication. I mean, really, it's about relationship building, and one of the things that I've noticed as a federal lawmaker is that oftentimes when there's an issue, even at the local level, at some juncture in the dominoes, there's a missing domino, and so there's some sort of missing communication. There's some sort of a gap, and what we've tried to do is we try to be a connector between federal, state, and local entities so that we can close that gap and ensure that whatever issue or challenge you're facing that it gets done.



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**Representative Heather Crawford:** Absolutely! I think that communication is key, all of us working together - local, state, federal government. It delivers a better product for our constituents, and it certainly helps get things done for sure. What are some of your priorities for the 117th Congress? What are you working on now?

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** I didn't know that as a freshman up here that you can get more than one committee assignment. I got three, and I still don't know if I drew the short straw or the long one, I don't know yet.

Infrastructure – so, in my particular district, like Heather, it's along the coast and beaches, and so I have a port, I have airports, I have military installations, and so the [Transportation Infrastructure Committee](#) is my forever home where I want to work on it in a nonpartisan, bipartisan way – the infrastructure package. There will be a federal infrastructure package, by the way, determined this spring. How we paid for it, I still don't know, and I have no idea how we're going to do that. And then the second committee I'm on is the [Veterans Affairs Committee](#) and then third committee is [Oversight and Government Reform](#) where we investigate things like waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** Thank you again, Nancy, for joining us. If you haven't submitted any questions yet, please feel free to write them in the Chat Box from the toolbar. Remember to select “to everyone” in the drop-down menu, so we can see them, and let us know what state you're from as well. While questions are being posted, we're going to keep chatting a little bit with Congresswoman Mace.

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** I do want to say – I do want to add one more thing, and that's the committee work that I'm doing. Environmental issues are really important. I think that's a place, if you've got moderate Democrats and Republicans that can work together - that's a place where I am also trying to work, and my first bill that I passed out of the House was a criminal justice bill I passed as the lead Republican sponsor my roughly 50th day in office.

Because I was such a strong voice in the days and weeks following January 6th, it opened up many opportunities for me. I had Democrat Charlie Crist personally walk to my office a bill to sign on to, to be the lead Republican sponsor to recognize a Capitol Hill police officer with the Congressional gold medal in the days following that event. It also led me to be the lead on several other bills in the defense industry and military. Criminal justice reform is an issue that's near and dear to my heart, and so it's a place where we can work together. That's why I keep harping on confidence and courage and those types of things, that kind of character, because when you have that, you can be successful across the aisle.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** Absolutely. Nearly half the members of Congress are former state legislators and other statewide leaders. Nancy, what advice do you have for women that are thinking of running for the state legislature, or maybe even state legislators that are thinking about running for Congress or higher office?



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**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** I mean, many of you know this - just pull off the Band-Aid. Do it. Run. This particular year, the Republican freshman class, we more than doubled the number of Republican women, but it's nowhere near reflective of our society or our communities, and if we don't run, we can't win. Some Members of Congress have to run multiple times before they can get elected, so it doesn't matter whether you're running for federal, state, or local. Sometimes you have to run multiple times.

If you want to be involved and run for office, but you're not ready to do that quite yet, volunteer on someone's campaign, volunteer in someone's office, so you really understand what you would be committing your life to, essentially. This is a commitment. It's unlike anything other, but it is a true honor as many of you women who serve. You understand. We understand that.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** How do you think that organizations like Women In Government can play a role in facilitating communication between state and federal lawmakers?

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** Getting as many Members as you can and being that bridge. In fact, I know I've heard of Women In Government, I don't know that I've ever participated in an event, so I'm glad I finally get an opportunity to do that. I think one of the assets that women can have in government is our communication skills. We're very efficient when we work. But, ensuring that we can continue to build relationships with each other, because you just never know when you can do something for somebody else and help them. By helping others over time, you have such a great network that when you need something, they'll be there for you too.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** I think we have a couple of questions coming in.

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** And I have a hard stop, I know, at 3:00.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** Well, we got just a few more minutes, so we'll make sure we get you out on time. We got a couple of questions coming in.

Can you tell us about early friendships that you've made on the on The Hill so far? With this being COVID, I know things have been much more difficult this year. A lot of things are virtual - obviously, things, even with your swearing-in with myself and many of our colleagues that were going to come to DC to watch your swearing-in and couldn't because of COVID – so, how have things been different, and how have you been able to kind of get some of those relationships and bonds to help you be more successful in Congress?

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** Certainly, having restaurants shut down, it does make it very difficult. I've hosted, like I did – Heather, you will not be surprised, but I host happy hours. Sometimes happy hours are in my office, sometimes they are off site, and I am a nonpartisan happy hour kind of person. I don't mind an afternoon cocktail every once in a while, and that's one of the ways that I've been doing that and also reaching out to people.



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Because I've been so vocal up here, people know that they can reach out to me and my message to everyone is I'm willing to work with anyone who's willing to work with me. That's been my message, that's been my M.O., and so it's really opened the door to building those relationships. Caffeine is good too. I drink coffee all day. In moderation, of course, so it's like one-on-ones, usually that kind of thing, because you can't really get together as a big group.

The encouraging thing about the Johnson & Johnson single dose vaccination is I have greater, faster hopes for our recovery out of this thing - far more than I did even two weeks ago, so that should be encouraging for everyone who's ready to get back and see people in person again.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** We have time for one more last quick question. I know we gotta let you go, but are there any women or a particular woman that has inspired you and helped you get to where you are today?

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** My mom and my kids. I have a daughter and a son, but my mom has been my biggest cheerleader through thick and thin.

You know, I believe in second chances in life, and she's been the one to teach me and prop me up when I've been down and to get me through a tough time. She's always been there, never judged, and always held my hand through those challenges, and I wouldn't be here today without her.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** Well, we want to thank you for joining us. Do you have any last remarks or final comments?

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** I just want to say thank you, and I love you. I miss you, I want to squeeze you and just give you a hug.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** Virtual hug

**Congresswoman Nancy Mace:** I know, I miss you. I can't wait to get to Columbia and see you. Thank you for the invitation to be here this afternoon. I appreciate what Women In Government is doing for state and federal women in office and folks in government, so I appreciate it so much.

**Representative Heather Crawford:** Thank you again, Nancy. We miss you. We're so proud of you. Thank you for joining us. Very insightful discussion, and I wish you well during your first term. Stay in touch! We'll talk to you soon. Thank you to our audience.

I'd like to remind everyone that this presentation will be available on the Women In Government website after a few days post event. Women In Government will also be back March the 22nd with a virtual webinar, [#SheLeads: Online Safety for Women Legislators](#).

Thank you so much to everyone, Congresswoman Mace, and to our Women In Government folks for putting this together. Be sure to register for that March 22nd event, and until then, everyone, please be safe and be well. See you soon! Thanks!