

Hello, this is **Braeden Chase Hogie** from Lake Park, **Minnesota**. This is my essay. I hope it is helpful.

First and foremost, I must say thank you to everyone in affiliation with the Hearst Foundation who made this phenomenal opportunity possible. I enjoyed every bit of my week in Washington. I will never forget this trip and all of the exciting moments that occurred throughout. This trip certainly increased my knowledge of how our national government operates. It is amazing that I got to partake in such a marvelous experience. So again, thank you for the opportunity.

The more memorable moments for me took place while the group was listening to the strong cast of speakers. When I think about every government official that we listened to, I still cannot believe I actually spent time in the same room as these people.

My favorite part, which will more than likely be every delegate's, was listening to our very personable, intelligible, and compassionate president Barack Obama. I was just astounded to have listened to one of my heroes, actually shake hands with the man, and have him look me in the eye. I will never forget the moments while I was with the rest of the delegates, waiting outside the Oval Office in nervous anticipation for President Obama to arrive and spend some time with us. I feel so blessed to have had the magnificent chance to meet him.

Throughout the rest of the week, while I was not drooling over Barack Obama, I remember so many other great things that took place. I would have to say that the second most rewarding experience was listening to Ruth Bader Ginsburg speak to all of us. After all that she has been through, illness, tragedy, and success in advancing herself into the Supreme Court position, for her to take that much time out of her demanding day was very special to me. She is a wonderful woman who has achieved so much, and for her to remember the youth and how important we are to the future of our country is very humbling.

Though those two speakers were the highlights of my trip, there are several others that were definitely worth my time. Brian Lamb was honest and very knowledgeable. I thought he was kind to take time out of his day to be with us. I know there are many other speakers that had a great message, and yes every speaker was helpful to my reason of being in Washington, which was to learn more about the United States government and how it operates.

The thing you must do when you visit our nation's capitol is obviously visit the memorials and monuments. I thoroughly enjoyed all of the monuments and memorials we visited. I still think that my favorite memorial would have to be the Lincoln Memorial, just because I like President Lincoln and I really like Martin Luther King Jr. Even though that was my favorite, I know that several memorials fall right behind that one. If it weren't for the Lincoln Memorial, and my biased respect of Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr., I would say that Arlington National Cemetery was truly a sight to see. The changing of the guard was a must see, and it was unbelievable that they have been doing that same routine for so many consecutive years. However, the best part of Arlington, in my opinion was the John F. Kennedy Eternal Flame, and the monument in his honor with several excerpts from his famous speeches.

Of course the monuments and the speakers, but that's not the end of my excitement. The buildings and museums were wonderful. My favorite building is the capitol building, but I also loved the tour of the White House, the Supreme Court, the Pentagon, Department of State, and the Senate building. Wow! When I remember every place we toured, I am still amazed at the places we saw. I enjoyed seeing the artwork at the

numerous museums that we attended. It is very difficult to pick just one museum as being better than the other because they are all tremendous in their own way.

Yes the speakers, the monuments, and everything in Washington is wonderful, but there are a few things that made the trip unforgettable. The things that made the trip what it is, and keep the United States Senate Youth Program so exciting are the delegates in attendance, and the military mentors. I cannot express the enormous amount of newfound respect I have for our military and the people that shared their time, energy, and stories with us. The military mentors were entertaining and supportive. They are truly remarkable people and I cannot thank them enough for all that they did for us, and do for our country.

Last, but most certainly not least, I thank all of my fellow delegates for the memories that will last me a lifetime. I am so thankful to have shared this opportunity with the future leaders of our country. Every delegate was knowledgeable, down to earth, and fun to be around. I want to thank every last one of them for making this week a memorable one.

I came to Washington not knowing what exactly to expect from the experience, and I was nervous when I arrived because I was unprepared for all of the excellent activities we participated in. I am so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the United States Senate Youth Program and to share a common passion for politics with one hundred and three other outstanding students. I really will carry the memories of the United States Senate Youth Program with me forever. Thank you once again for the unforgettable week.

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