

Washington Week 2009 was one of the most glorious journeys of a lifetime! The United State Senate Youth Program was a rewarding and memorable educational week for me as I made new friends, was introduced to seventeen amazing military mentors and numerous dignitaries of our country's finest.

This journey to the nation's capital was an experience of a lifetime. Michael Leiter, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center and Office of the Director of National Intelligence was my favorite speaker. He had great stories of hiding in his basement on 9/11 to share with us and provided great insight to us delegates regarding the positive and negative ideologies our Government deals with and how we are trying to counter them. He stated, "If there are no Counterterrorism jobs out there, we've won. Sadly, this is highly unlikely." He also stated that his mission is to make sure that the country is keeping us citizens safe. He ended his speech with, "We as a country have not come up with something that works. When we pull people and get information from terrorists, we torture them. Torture is not always the answer." Knowing that people like Mr. Leiter are helping to ensure safety in our country is comforting and reassuring that we, as a country will get through these times and hopefully one day, solve the issues we are currently facing.

James B. Steinburg who is the Deputy Secretary of State was also one of my favorite speakers. He recognizes the problems that we are facing and reiterated that we have to cooperate with people who share similar goals as us and work together to take risks and not only depend on the government to solve our problems. He also helped me to realize that we need to come to our own forms of public service by remembering the value of public service and the differences we will make wherever we are, whether it be in school, our hometowns, communities and even the world.

Among the many different sites we toured in the nation's capital, my favorites were the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Newseum and the Arlington National Cemetery. These places brought a feeling of patriotism and hope among my fellow delegates and me. As a daughter of a Veteran I am constantly unconsciously reminded of the defaults of war and the horror it can cause. I was overwhelmed to see 320,000 gravestones of people, men and women who have fought for our country and sacrificed their family, friends and selves for the good of our country, freedom and liberty. I was inspired and thankful to the men and women who serviced out country. Through these national sites, wonderful speakers and Washington Week 2009 itself I was reminded of what a great country we live in and how thankful I am to be apart of this group and to have had this privilege of a lifetime.

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