

Talha Mirza, MI - 2015

“Talha, there’s a package waiting for you on the kitchen table, it’s from the Michigan Department Education, are you failing school or something?” my mother jokingly said over the phone. It was here, and I had butterflies in my stomach right up to the point where I shredded my lovely white UPS package open, fumbled through the blue folder, and read the words “Dear Talha Mirza.... Congratulations on being selected for the 53rd Annual United States Senate Youth Program!”. This must be a mistake I thought, there’s no way I was one of the *extremely* lucky and fortunate aspiring civil servants to be selected, let alone across a whole state. I was elated, and read the entire contents of my package from front to back, and the back to front, then front to back again just to make sure I wasn’t dreaming.

To be honest, I wasn’t expecting to get in, but then I went back over my essays, and I realized I may or may not have been the smartest, most qualified, or most accomplished candidate, but that I believe I was the most enthusiastic and excited about the government and its function. I talked about how the USSYP would not only ease the burden of paying for my post-secondary education, but also how it would bless me with the unheard of and extremely rare opportunity to get a pragmatic and hands on experience of D.C., and the multitude of facets that comprise our nation’s federal government.

Regardless, I was ecstatic, and I could feel the excitement building up as the wheels on my plane touched down at Reagan Airport. From the moment I walked out of the gate, I was treated like royalty by the staff and coordinators of the program (although being photographed like a celebrity right as I walked off my flight was somewhat of a surprise, I forgot to shave the morning of). From dining on scrumptious three course meals in the National Archives beside our nation’s most critical documents, to discussing the unusual amount of Swedish players on the Detroit Red Wings with Swedish Ambassador Bjorn Lyrvall, to making countless friends to share many amazing amounts of laughter with, I know it sounds cliché, but it was one of the best weeks of my life. I usually dislike being unoriginal, but take my word, and take the word of my fellow 103 peers: this is *the* opportunity of a lifetime.

Even if your career path does not include politics or anything governmentally related, you must remember, that above all, the USSYP promotes leaders and public servants of the future. One can be a public servant with any profession, whether it be a doctor, lawyer, social worker, engineer, teacher, or anything you desire. Like our president said to my delegation, “do not worry about who you want to be, worry about what you want to do.” USSYP sparked my realization that it doesn’t matter which field I enter or career I pursue, as long as I stick to my morals and do things for the betterment of myself, my community, my nation, and my world.

So to the senator, congressman or congresswoman, student, teacher, (even you Mr. President) or anyone reading this, thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to attend this fantastic program. Hopefully you’ll see me back in D.C. in several years, working as a health care policy lawyer, and one day running for office (#MirzaforPresident2044). One more thing, to anyone out there thinking of applying, tell all your friends, use social media to get this program out there, and above all, like Nike says, “Just do it.”

Still missing the amazing food, people, and memories of USSYP 2015,