

Alex Yom, IN – 2016

Time To Give Back

I recently had the honor of returning from a week in Washington, D.C. to represent Indiana as one of two delegates to the United States Senate Youth Program. The experiences that I had during the week in Washington are ones that I will never forget.

Throughout the week, I was able to see landmark after landmark, museum after museum, and government official after government official. We were able to meet high-profile public servants like Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, our U.S. Senators Coats and Donnelly, and of course the president of the United States. I actually had the opportunity to ask President Obama a question about the growing partisanship in our country.

However despite the high-profile people that I had the opportunity to meet throughout the week, most importantly were the interactions I had with the 103 other delegates from all 50 states, D.C., and U.S. military bases around the world. I learned more from them about their different views and backgrounds than I did while hearing from high-profile speakers. Having discussions with them about campaign finance reform, foreign policy, tax codes, environmental regulation, and just about every public policy topic available opened my eyes to so many different viewpoints and perspectives, ones that have allowed me to become a more informed citizen. Every single delegate still keeps in touch through a giant group chat and I know that week in Washington won't be the last time that we will all meet each other as our paths are sure to cross in the future.

I was even inspired by my fellow delegates to bring my ideas back home and help out my own city. After many discussions with my roommate who is a student member of his local school board, I soon found out that many states have some sort of a student member of the school board in place, from all of Maryland's 26 counties to the state school board of Hawaii. That gave the idea to contact my own local school board in Carmel about setting up a student member of the school board by the year 2017.

My week in Washington as part of the United States Senate Youth program has given me so many new perspectives, viewpoints, and ideas about the issues that affect us now and into the future. The interactions I had not only with high-profile government officials, but my fellow delegates are ones that I will never forget. Now it is time to use all the things I've learned to help give back and serve the community.