

Dasom Ham, MN – 2016

There is a quote that says, “You can always debate about what you should have done. The question is what are you going to do?” During his career as a senator and then the 38th vice president, Hubert Humphrey lived up to his quote. As one of the sponsors of the United States Senate Resolution 324, he helped create the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) that I had the honor to attend in March 2016. As one of the delegates hailing from his state, Minnesota, I became a part of a week-long, jam-packed program at our country’s capital.

The first day at USSYP certainly set the tone for the rest of the week. I was able to meet the 103 delegates from around the United States and from Okinawa and Seoul. Furthermore, I met incredible USSYP alumni and our military mentors. At the end of the day, I concluded that everyone was incredible and passionate in taking action, whether he or she participated in political campaigns or served our country. I truly felt honored to be surrounded by people who are working on continuing to fulfill our American values of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Certainly the entire week did not disprove my conclusion.

Over the course of the week, we went to historical landmarks and met with a variety of influential figures, ranging from NASA to Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg. While listening and taking notes in my journal, I heard the passion within each speaker for his or her work. As I look back, there were two events that became my favorite memories. My first favorite event was meeting President Obama. My favorite event was certainly one reason, but the more attractive point to me was his jokes and appearance, which showed that he was a human like everyone in the room. He showed his personality and shared his genuine thoughts. In addition, he shared an advice that I will take away: “Don’t focus on what you want to be; focus on what you want to do.” The underlying message of acting towards a goal has and will continue to resonate within me. As a person who plans to study economics and public policy, I felt my passion and desire to become part of a group that alleviates poverty and growing disparities increase. My second favorite event was meeting the senators in the Kennedy Caucus room. My preconception about senators dissipated once I met my state’s senators. They laughed and joked around with the other Minnesota delegate and me. Even a senator from a different state tried to photobomb the picture with my senator. The interactions with them made me realize that they were indeed humans addressing issues through our democratic process.

After my experience at Washington Week, I feel that I will live in a future where people are addressing issues through action rather than continuous gridlock and dragging debates. I am confident that we are changing the connotation of the phrase, “Let’s make America great again” to a positive motto that includes everyone regardless of religion, gender, sexuality, age, disability and race.