

“Work toward not who you want to be, but rather what you want to accomplish.” Spoken by President Obama during his final presidential address to delegates of the United States Senate Youth Program, these words most meaningfully articulate the extent to which the Senate Youth experience irrevocably broadened my public service horizons. In the context of each delegate’s demonstrated commitment to leadership, education, and service, the opportunity to participate in the Senate Youth Program has proven to be a powerful experiential call to action which has reinforced my resolve to campaign for justice and equality, to seek innovative and inclusive solutions, and to advantage my talents toward the advancement of all people through democratic processes. Upon acquiring a more fully informed perspective regarding the realities of leadership through service through my week in the city whose discourse divides and unites our country, whose policies affect millions, and whose existence serves as a testament to the freedoms of our great nation, spent alongside the most inspiring visionaries of our time, I am genuinely better equipped to improve the circumstances of those from all walks of life in my school, community, and nation.

From the moment that I set foot in the Grand Ballroom of The Mayflower Hotel, its classical grandeur in combination with the sparkling discussion regarding national issues of the utmost salience and explosiveness illuminated the reality that Washington Week would inevitably be the best one of my young life. In my element as my passions for history, public policy, and patriotism were piqued throughout the week, I became truly aware that our generation would change the world for the better. This certainty was further brought to light during our Sunday tour of Mount Vernon, during which George Washington’s quote that “A primary object should be the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important? And what duty more pressing than communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of the country?” particularly struck a chord with me. To be sure, this was not the first statement of the week that would open my mind to diverse, relevant, and previously undiscovered perspectives, nor would it be the last. The speakers with whose presence we were gifted, including Secretary of the Senate Julie Adams, German Ambassador to the United States Peter Wittig, and my personal political hero, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, each exuded an irrepressible passion for their work in public service. The immense pool of knowledge to which we were exposed through the program’s speakers, with their inside perspectives and hands-on experience, was beyond anything that I’d ever dreamed of experiencing and was truly inspiring, particularly when coupled with the profound experience of being able to turn to a delegate who hailed from across the aisle and engaging in respectful, intelligent discussion regarding the topics about which we had learned that day, an opportunity that left me beyond confident that the future of our nation is truly in good hands.

Though I could easily populate the pages of several novels with my words reliving my experiences with the Senate Youth Program, if I were forced at gunpoint to describe Washington Week and its impact upon my public service future in one word, I would choose *beyond*. The feeling of being inside the White House and witnessing the president of the United States, the leader of the free world, walking toward you, is beyond surreal. The excitement of discussing with Senator Warren the nuances of her recent contributions to *The Boston Globe* is beyond gratifying. The experience of finally being able to ask your role model as a public policy analyst and as a leader, Justice Ginsburg, whether she believes that law is found or whether she believes that it is created (created), was beyond life-changing. Finally, the program challenged each delegate to reach beyond their deeply-held opinions and beliefs and hometown allegiances to truly respect, understand, and grow from embracing the ideas of others. Overall, the depth of inspiration showered upon the delegates of the United States Senate Youth Program by the greatest leaders, both current and future, to ever chart the course of any nation on Earth is nearly indescribable. Accordingly, I would like to take this and all opportunities to express my most sincere gratitude to The Hearst Foundations for making possible experiences that will inevitably change the future of not only our nation, but also our world, for the better.

In conclusion, the Senate Youth Program absolutely epitomizes an experience that is making a true difference across the nation by changing innumerable lives for generations to come, whether this be accomplished directly through providing an eye-opening learning experience to delegates or by inspiring

others whose lives are touched through the leadership of its alumni. In its sparking of interaction with national leaders and fellow delegates who hail from across the United States and the ideological spectrum, the opportunity provided by the Senate Youth Program to experience the realities of governing our nation has crystallized my commitment to and informed my perspective regarding the meaning and impact of democratic political leadership. By witnessing not only the power of action and rhetoric, but also the discovery of my own passions in public policy, I was further enabled to understand the governmental practicalities of securing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for an increasingly diverse American people.