

REFLECTION ON TRANSFORMATION

Six months ago, I was not sure what “United States Senate Youth Program” (USSYP) was or what it did. All I knew was that I had the privilege of being in the presence of our 44th president. Today, I can say that the United States Senate Youth Program has transformed and shaped my life. I quickly realized that the highlight of this program would not be defined by a single event. It was the entirety of the trip, the student delegates, the distinguished guests, inside jokes, speakers, and military mentors that made this trip life changing.

Specifically, Emmy Meyer, a military mentor, inspired me to attend the United States Naval Academy. Her strong character and charisma have led me to aspire to follow her footsteps and serve our country. Lieutenant Meyer made the Naval Academy seem like more than just a dream-- she made it real. Her stories and advice prepared me for the amount of dedication needed to succeed in one of the country's best academies. I am forever grateful for Emmy Meyer and USSYP for opening a door that will lead me to achieve my goals.

I took a moment to look at the Yale, Harvard, and Princeton shirts I saw parading around. With all my intelligent peers surrounding me, I stopped to think “How did I qualify for this?” Simple explanations flooded my head. Perhaps my state wasn't competitive or I lucked out, but none of that is true. I am a United States Senate Youth scholar because, just like everyone else, I earned it. It is not a fluke that I had the pleasure to be surrounded by some of the smartest kids in the country.

Washington Week allowed me to connect with people from all over the United States. Prior to USSYP, I had never had the opportunity to discuss controversial topics with a diverse group of students. I took advantage of this privilege by listening to debates between peers and constantly trying to understand why each side believed they were right. I learned that compromise usually solved issues more quickly and more effectively. Compromise is something you don't see often in government, but I think the strongest government is one that can understand each other and be willing to sacrifice something for the good of the people. But, if I had to take away one thing from this program Senator Cory Gardner put it best, “You don't need to act like you belong, because you DO belong. You belong in D.C.” I learned that I do belong with the 54th annual United States Senate Youth delegates; I learned to have confidence in myself and trust that I, along with my fellow scholars, are enough to take on the challenges of the future.