

Jake Ingoglia, IN — 2017

## Reflecting on Washington Week

Although Washington Week was over a month ago, the week still remains fresh in my memory. This is not a testament to my memory, but to the indelible impact that the United States Senate Youth Program has had on me. My time in Washington has supplied me with innumerable memories and endless motivation for my future.

Before I recollect on the week though, I must thank The Hearst Foundations for making such a dreamlike week a reality. Their dedication towards furthering the civic knowledge of aspiring high school students touches me. I feel forever indebted for the priceless experience I had during Washington Week, so I extend my sincerest gratitude towards everyone who helped make it possible.

The first day of the week, spent almost entirely in the Mayflower, eased us into the phenomenal week that would ensue. I was immediately inspired by the benevolence and passion exuded by my fellow delegates. Never before have I been surrounded by such motivated people, which in return, has encouraged me to strive for personal growth.

Plenty of moments during the trip felt surreal, but none to the same extent as the White House visit. I still remember peeking at the building through a faraway fence while I was in the sixth grade, awe-stricken by its significance. Now six years later, the positions were swapped. I was blissfully gazing through the White House windows, looking out towards the crowd. Little moments such as that one, which are easy to overlook, I will never forget.

There were also moments not so easy to overlook in terms of significance. One of those moments was meeting Chief Justice John Roberts. Being an Indiana delegate came with the perk of personally meeting and taking a photo with fellow Hoosier Chief Justice John Roberts. The nerves I felt ran rapid through my body as I stood in his chamber awaiting him; In just a few seconds I would be meeting one of the most influential men in America. Those are the moments that you never forget.

One of the most motivating speakers was Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. The speech occurred right after breakfast, a time when most delegates are still half-asleep. However, the composure and passion exuded by the Surgeon General quickly enthralled the crowd. He left us with three key lessons to abide by: remember to take risks, think short term instead of long term, and value the anchors in your life. He meticulously elaborated on each lesson, encouraging us to evaluate our own lives on these principles. Although it was early in the morning, that speech energized us for the rest of the day.

The intelligence present at the United States Senate Youth Program was extraordinary. Although delegates came from all backgrounds and views—Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, Libertarians — there was one commonality: a willingness to listen. In the polarized political climate we live in today, that's something that is rarely seen. However, at the Senate Youth Program students welcomed different ideas and shared them openly. It was unlike any environment I have ever been part of.

Throughout high school I have been able to attend many lauded programs, yet none of them compare to the United States Senate Youth Program. Each day was packed with unrivaled experiences and unforgettable memories. I've returned to Indiana as a different person, a more motivated person. In the words of Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, "Everyone has a deep wealth of potential, they just need to be given the chance." Washington Week gave me the chance to recognize my potential, and now as I return to reality, I will do all I can to utilize that deep wealth of potential.