

John (Jack) Campbell, KS – 2017

My experience representing the state of Kansas in the United States Senate Youth Program Washington Week was transformative and enlightening. I am grateful to have had the privilege of participating in this incredible program and meeting so many accomplished people so willing to share their time with me.

I have always loved discussing politics and participating in leadership activities but I have never been a part of anything like the United States Senate Youth Program. From when I boarded the plane to Washington, D.C. to when I returned to Kansas City, every minute of the trip was truly illuminating and thought provoking. My perspective on many political issues was expanded through various distinguished speakers and, perhaps just as importantly, through conversations with the other delegates. As Jack Warren of the Society of the Cincinnati said, "Every debate is an act of liberty." The other delegates and I exhausted this patriotic right as we often found ourselves debating during meals and in the Grand Ballroom when we had free time. Each debate was an opportunity to learn a new perspective from a well-informed bright mind. When the other delegates and I were not discussing politics we often talked about just normal kid things like, "what kind of music do you listen to?" or "what do you do for fun in your state?" (I often got this question being from a "flyover" state). These conversations were just as educational. I learned so much about life in the other states. Because of these interactions with other delegates, we became close and I can now say I have friends in every state in the union.

While all the speakers on the Washington Week agenda were exceptional, Jack Warren of the Society of the Cincinnati had a riveting message on the American Revolution. Mr. Warren's address was over the national identity of civic virtue created by the Founding Fathers' sacrifices. He illustrated this theme by emphasizing the selflessness of George Washington who sacrificed his own personal interests to promote the values of the American Revolution. Mr. Warren's message inspired me to seek the same level of selflessness as I pursue a career serving my country. Another speaker I enjoyed was Mark Shriver of the Save the Children Network. His message on early childhood education and getting involved in government was galvanizing. Like Mr. Warren he stressed the importance of service over personal gain. Both speakers affirmed that holding public office is really about service to one's country and one's fellow citizens.

I have been incredibly fortunate to have participated in Washington Week. I am grateful for this experience and the \$10,000 scholarship from The Hearst Foundations. It is extraordinary what The Hearst Foundations has done for this program over the past fifty-five years. I am confident that the other delegates and I will make a good return on the investment made on behalf of The Hearst Foundations.