

Dale J. "Trip" Apley III, MI – 2017

It has not been easy to consolidate into a few paragraphs one of the most amazing weeks of my life. After spending time reflecting on the United States Senate Youth program (USSYP) Washington Week experience, the recurring word that comes to mind is "gratitude."

First, I am truly thankful for the United States Senate, The Hearst Foundations, and USSYP team for all the outstanding resources and effort they put into this program. Over the course of one week, a group of teens has been given access to speakers, ideas, and experiences that most citizens would not dream of in a lifetime.

I am still in awe and grateful to our nation's leaders for their ability to inspire and guide our nation. Each one of their words made a large and lasting impression on me. A few thoughts that were most memorable include:

- Surgeon General Vivek Murthy recommended scheduling time in our busy lives for thinking and reflection.
- Senator Cory Booker said to make the debate about the idea and not the person.
- CBS News Journalist Bob Schieffer said to strive to find the truth by using many sources.
- Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said to be aware that we are all born with integrity and no one can take it, but you can give it up.

These are just a few of the many influential thoughts and guiding principles that were discussed during our week. I will remind myself regularly of them as I move forward in my life.

I want to thank our Military Mentors for showing us first hand what honor, commitment, and service to our country looks like. I learned much from their stories and experiences. They are my heroes, and I am forever grateful for all they do for our great nation.

I want to thank the 103 delegates from all over the country and the world for sharing my passion for learning more about our government, constructively challenging me, and sharing their optimism and commitment for making our world better. I will treasure the friendships I made and I look forward to seeing the mark we make on America's political history.

And finally, I am grateful to live in a country where ideas can be discussed openly and there is a continuous goal of excellence for all citizens. We may disagree how to accomplish this objective, but we are all committed to the best outcome possible. Again, I would like to thank all involved for this opportunity.