

Andrew Pogue, MO – 2017

A Young American's Renewed Spirit

Clinton, Missouri is the place I have called home for all 18 years of my life. It is a quiet little town in the rural part of west central Missouri with two claims to fame: the largest historic square in the state of Missouri and Truman Lake, the home of Crappie Masters. Clinton is the county seat of Henry County home to approximately 22,000 residents. Both sides of my family have long histories here with two main interests: politics and agriculture.

My paternal grandfather farmed until the late 1980s when his farm went bankrupt. My dad was in high school when they were forced to leave the land the family had been farming for years and move to town. Although disappointed in his failure to keep the farm, my grandfather gained a new sense of purpose and decided to enter local politics by running for the county clerk position. He won the election and served in the position for over 20 years. Some of my fondest memories of my childhood were spent with my grandfather in the County Clerk's office in the Henry County Court House and walking in the parades with him during reelection years. Although my grandfather dealt with debt for many years, his spirit to make the county a better place to live never ceased. It was in those early years of my life where my love for public service began.

There are only two classes I have ever liked in school: American government and American history. When people ask me what my ACT score is, I always tell them "Well, if government or history was on it, I would have a perfect score." The history of our nation is the history of a great experiment. An experiment where many brave men and women risked their fortunes and livelihoods to create a government in which they believed everyone would eventually be free and treated equally under the law. This experiment has been under many trials and has been at the brink of imploding, but thus far, this experiment has survived the test of time. It has been a blessing to be able to grow up in one of the greatest nations in the world, the United States of America, and it is one of my upmost passions to keep our county being "the city on the hill" as Reagan called it. It was the honor of my life to be able to attend Washington Week and meet those who have the same passion as me about our country.

Washington Week was so busy that it was just hard to take it all in. I was so awestruck by everything; my thoughts became jumbled over how blessed I was to live in this nation and how I could contribute to the betterment of our nation. One thing you must know about me is that I am a planner. I run through plans for how I would like to live my life so many times in a day that it makes my head hurt. When I hear someone talk about a position or career that I think is interesting, I always try to plan how I could end up in that position or career and be successful at it. I run through scenarios in my head. If I go to this college and take this job after, then this will lead to that and that will lead to this and eventually I'll be in that position which will allow me to make so much of a difference. I found myself doing this a lot during Washington Week.

In the weeks since Washington Week, I have had more time to think, and I have realized the two most important points I should have taken away from the week. First, it is okay not to have my whole life planned, and second, I do not have to hold a certain position to make a difference. I have realized that all I really need to do is stick to my four life goals: to serve God, to serve my country, to help others around our country attain the things they need to achieve their own life purposes, and to explore the natural wonders of the world. If I stick to these goals and seek to make people's lives better every day, it will not matter what position I attain in politics or any other field. I will live a fulfilling life of servitude no matter where I end up. Washington Week renewed my spirit of living a life of service and for that, I will forever be grateful to The Hearst Foundations and to those who made the week possible.