

## Pranoy Behera, OK – 2017

A desire that has propelled my entire academic career, and indeed has been my primary source of motivation, is my yearning to work towards the betterment of this land that I love, because this nation has given my family and I the peace and prosperity that we could have never achieved anywhere else.

My primary reason for applying for the United States Senate Youth Program was so that I could meet those inspiring figures who had made it their life's mission to embark on a similar journey. Thus, when I received the extraordinary news from my principal that my years of determination and hope had given me this chance of a lifetime, my joy knew no bounds as I happily leaped out of her office and upon reaching home, my parents joined me in my celebration. Nervous anxiety made the time fly by and my conversations with my fellow delegates on social media proved to be just as rewarding as I had expected.

Thus, when the week arrived and my plane touched down in Washington, D.C., I was not surprised at all to meet staff members that were helpful and dedicated to ensuring that my experience was complete. However, what I was delighted to experience was the fact that every speaker, every tour guide, every member of the staff believed in our potential, in our ability to foster change, in our future. They invested their precious time towards the betterment of the week because of their dedication towards each and every delegate. Whether it was Judge Robert Henry and his impactful allegory, or Chief Justice John Roberts and his quiet dignity, or whether it was the sheer thrill of meeting the most powerful individual in the world, all of these distinguished individuals had a faith in our leadership ability that is only matched by their own proven ability.

This was truly a week that shaped my life, that defined my missions and goals that broadened my worldwide. Most importantly, it gave me a renewed sense of confidence in myself, because I saw that 103 delegates, dozens of staff members, and some of the most profound leaders of our country were able to place their faith in me. For that and so much more that I can't express through any number of words, I am indebted to this program. As I return to my state, I can take back these lessons, understand this obligation, and continue on my lifelong goal of serving this nation, this land that I love. For it is USSYP that has reaffirmed this basic principle deep inside my heart: this nation has granted me so much prosperity and happiness that I am willing to spend every living moment in its service. That is the highest goal, the most imperative ideal for our generations, and one that I intend to fulfill for the rest of my life.