

Morgan Vincent, PA – 2017

How can I make a difference in the world today? Why do people gather in Washington, D.C. for the idea of public service? It may be because they feel as if they owe something to their country, possibly they enjoy politics and learning about the law, or maybe they have fallen in love with the idea that they can make this world a better place. The United States Youth Senate Program, better known as USSYP, was a once-in-a-lifetime experience attended by delegates from across the United States. These delegates were chosen through a vigorous process that varied by state. For Pennsylvania, I completed an application which was followed up by a test and interview in Harrisburg for the top ten applicants. Washington Week was an opportunity filled with new people, ideas, and lots of politics.

Never once in my life did I think I would meet the president of the United States, not even the vice president or secretary of State. Was it ever possible that I, Morgan Vincent, would get participate in an extravaganza that was as extraordinary as USSYP? Well the answer is yes. I was a member of the 2017 USSYP and I did meet the people listed above, along with many others. While in Washington, we had around 30 speakers of the highest caliber from places all over the United States. Personally, my favorite speaker was the Surgeon General, VADM Vivek Murthy. "We live in a world where we try to fill every blank piece of time. This empty space is when we think and fall into the accidental leap of faith," he said. As much as we like to think it is helpful and beneficial to plan our future, we need to take a step back and see what life throws at us. Dr. Murthy reminded us that we cannot let thoughts come at the expense of living our lives now because humans are most creative during free time. He also discussed how rebuilding America starts with younger generations. Do not waste time trying to correct old habits, while you could be teaching young children new ones. There was an overall sense of motivation through almost every single speaker that encouraged us to take action within our own communities. We owe our time by giving forms of public service to our country.

Take a minute to think about some of the best meals you have ever had. I bet you are thinking of some fancy restaurant that may have been considered "5 star" by someone you have never met. During Washington Week, the meals we had were absolutely fantastic. Not only because of the food itself, but also the location in which we ate. I absolutely enjoyed eating by the United States Constitution, in the Library of Congress and in The Mayflower Hotel. Each building was marvelous and certainly one-of-a-kind. Almost everywhere we went, one of our speakers was able to better inform us not only about the building, but also their position and how the daily events play out in their lives. The amount of knowledge I received during Washington Week was a real-life experience that will never be forgotten.

Yes, the speakers, buildings and food were good, but the most incredible and memorable part of my week was connecting with the Military Mentors, delegates, and The Hearst Foundations directors and staff. Without all of these people, USSYP would never be possible. I now have friendships with other people all across the country, every state included. If anyone of us ever needs a helping hand, recommendation or just a friend to talk to, we can look up the 2017 Class and reach out. It is a great feeling to have connections with people who share similar interests and goals because we will be helping each other along the way.

Overall, the United States Youth Senate Program is something that I wish every kid interested in politics could experience. Thank you to The Hearst Foundations for supporting this cause and helping high school students get a head start on their future. Looking forward, this program will continue to change the lives not only of those who attend, but the people they affect later on.