

Sabrina Ellis, UT— 2017

Washington Week

I feel truly honored to have been selected to represent Utah in the 2017 United States Senate Youth Program in Washington Week. I would like to thank the United States Senate and The Hearst Foundations for making this life-changing experience possible. Washington Week was a moment I will continue to hold on to and reflect on. From meeting the delegates on the first night, to the closing ceremony on the final, every moment was unforgettable. I appreciate the time that so many took out of their busy schedules to accommodate our presence. Every effort made to enhance our experience as student delegates was incredible.

When I first arrived to Washington Week, I did not know anyone besides my fellow Utah delegate. However, I was amazed as the week progressed, each delegate I met was incredible. Every conversation at meals, on the buses, or walking from place to place was interesting and enlightening. Interacting with 103 other delegates was definitely a highlight of this experience. Each brought a unique perspective and background to Washington Week, making it impossible to ever get bored.

The speakers were truly inspiring as well. Not only was it a privilege to meet them, but their words were meaningful and encouraging. I enjoyed the variety of backgrounds and occupations each came from. That variety made each speech unique and engaging. I thank them for the time and thought they put into addressing us. Some of my personal favorite quotes said by certain speakers are as follows:

Secretary of the Senate Julie Adams stated that, "it is possible to be nonpartisan and work in politics." I found this statement enlightening. Often times in news portrayal and casual conversation, it seems impossible to be nonpartisan and work in politics. However, this quote reaffirmed to me the possibility of not letting one's political affiliations prevent progress.

The surgeon general of the United States, VADM Vivek Murthy said, "Each person has a deep well of potential in them, they can do extraordinary things, just give them a chance." This quote was not only hopeful for me and my possibilities, but allowed me to additionally view others with a higher degree of respect. Surgeon General Murthy's story was truly one of inspiration.

The President of Save the Children Action Network, Mark Shriver expressed, "Government does not exist behind a desk." This particular quote was impactful to me. Washington Week reaffirmed the truth and importance of government working with and for the people. Government should not function from behind a dusky desk in an office, but within individuals' lives for their benefit.

Finally, Senator Cory Booker stated, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." The enthusiasm Senator Booker had about the political process assisting the people of this country was contagious. He helped me see that unity within an organization is critical to its efficiency.

Washington Week was a life-changing experience. I was able to meet many inspirational people, form friendships, learn about this remarkable county, and interact with so many amazing people. Our Military Mentors were phenomenal, and I will be forever grateful for the advice and insight they offered. Overall, this week was unlike anything I have experienced or will ever experience again. It was meaningful, educational, historical, relevant, fun, and inspirational. I will be a better person, better leader, better communicator, and a better citizen of the United States of America because of Washington Week.