

Audrey Worthing, NE – 2019

Transformative, inspirational, and educational are just some of the words that I would use to describe my experience during the United States Senate Youth Program's (USSYP) Washington Week. The moment I stepped into the Mayflower Hotel, I knew that my whole trajectory on life and the political world would change drastically. In just those first few hours, I made good friends, ate amazing food, and was able to speak with alumni of the program who, I discovered, took their experiences from previous Washington Weeks as their inspiration to change the world. Their stories gave me the motivation to absorb everything that I could from this amazing week.

Throughout my time in Washington D. C., we were introduced to political and public service leaders from all spectrums of our government and military system, from the chief justice of the Supreme Court to a representative of FEMA. We engaged with speakers from both sides of the aisle and it was so impactful to hear their stories and why they chose the careers that they did. All of these great discussions helped me solidify my personal beliefs and it gave me a glance at what it would be like to work for a government agency.

Not only did we get the opportunity to interact with some of our speakers and special guests, but we also had the chance to visit some historical venues. Ranging from Mt. Vernon to the Kennedy Caucus Room, the Senate Gallery, the Kennedy Center, several historical monuments, and the White House, I felt as if I were transported back in time. For someone that has a special fondness for history, I especially enjoyed these trips.

All these amazing, awe-inspiring experiences were truly transformative but my week in D.C. would not have been complete without my 103 co-delegates. We talked about a wide variety of issues affecting our country and government and I think that we all gained new insight into the viewpoints of people that we did not necessarily agree with. We respected each other and were supportive of each other's goals and aspirations. I made some amazing friends and am so grateful for all the discussions that we had.

It has been two weeks since Washington Week, and I can say that it was one of the best weeks of my life. I learned so much and my appreciation for the people that run our government grew immensely. When it comes to thanking the people, who helped make this week as inspirational as it was, I barely know where to begin. To my co-delegates, thank you for all the amazing memories that you have given me! I will always remember our wonderful conversations. To my Military Mentor, Lieutenant Commander Drewniak, thank you for guiding us throughout the week and for being a wonderful example that I hope to live up to one day. To the Hearst Foundations and to all our speakers, thank you for this wonderful opportunity and all the information and memories you helped to foster within each of us. I have grown as an individual and one day, hope to give back to our country and the people who have shown me the true meaning of commitment and service. Thank you USSYP for such a transformative week!