

Sahith Kaki, NH – 2019

The moment I walked into the Mayflower Hotel for the first time, I knew that the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) was going to change my life. Though I heard so much from previous delegates and was prepared for a life-changing experience, my expectations were surpassed almost immediately. As I walked into the room, I had the opportunity to speak with dozens of inspiring and intelligent student delegates from all corners of the country.

From the starting moments of the week, I was able to meet with leaders from every major branch of the government. On Monday, we were able to meet with Judge Robert Henry, who talked to us about the importance of each branch of government, the role of judges in our society, and several other fascinating topics. Then later that day, we went to the Supreme Court and were able to listen to Chief Justice John Roberts. In fact, I was so awestruck and captivated by Chief Justice Roberts that I completely forgot to ask my question! From these two talks, I was able to further develop my perspective on the judicial branch and I will forever be thankful for these enlightening moments.

Throughout the week, I was also able to hear from several leaders of the legislative branch including Senator Ernst, Senator Blumenthal, Senator Bennet, and Senator Hassan. Coming into the week, I noticed that several media outlets portray a plethora of Senate members as one-sided and unable to identify with people across the aisle. I immediately found this to be false as all of the senators discussed imperfections and strengths of both major parties. These discussions showed me that American politicians truly care about this nation and the future generations of the world.

On Thursday, I was able to meet the President of the United States Donald Trump. This was the most special day of my life! For a young child of Indian immigrants to meet the president of the United States showed me that anything is possible with hard work. To be able to meet and shake hands with the president, whose position is revered, was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Finally, I was able to talk with our Military Mentors throughout the week. These insightful conversations, ranging from the purpose of our military around the world to the political activism of former military members, allowed me to develop my political perspective in a way that would be impossible without this program. They provided me with invaluable insight to the world that I would never have thought about otherwise.

I came to Washington Week hearing about the partisan nature of our country and left with a refreshing feeling that our country is and will continue to be in good hands. The other delegates taught me so much through our mature conversations and debates and showed me that the future will be bright. As Secretary Carson told us, "We can accomplish so much more when nobody cares about who gets the credit," and I hope our delegates will follow this message in the future.

While my friends and family members always use the phrase "life-changing" for lots of events, this program truly changed my outlook on the world. This has been the best week of my life and I truly appreciate everything the Hearst Foundations has done for me. Thank you!