

Jack Brenneman, SD – 2019

Political Efficacy is the citizen's faith and trust in their government and a belief that a single citizen can influence policy. My political efficacy was at an all-time high after Washington week, primarily because of my incredible fellow delegates. Between the powerful and insightful speakers and the dialogue and discourse with my peers, I was left feeling like a new generation of change was possible.

We met plenty of high-powered government officials, but the person that left me the most inspired was Julie Adams. Being one of the first to speak to our group, I wasn't sure what to expect from the Secretary of the Senate (a position I had very little awareness of). However, I was left feeling entirely motivated not by what she spoke about and the ideas that she espoused, but by where she went to school. Adams received her degree from Luther College, a school a mere 4 hours away from me. The stereotype for a typical political figure is someone who received an Ivy League education and hails from a coastal state, but Adams was able to rise to her position despite not fitting into this stereotype. This was incredibly inspirational for a Midwestern student from a congressional district-at-large. Seeing the vast array of backgrounds culminating into our incredible speakers increased my political efficacy.

Although our speakers left indelible impressions upon all of us, I have no doubt that every single student was impacted more by one another than any of our speakers. Being surrounded by peers of different opinions but similar passions left everyone feeling politically stimulated and engaged. It was absolutely incredible, and I have never been more impressed by a single group of high schoolers. Delegates from all across America, spanning the entire political spectrum, of all different ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, and religious backgrounds, discussing intellectual and impactful matters. I walked away from every single one feeling more informed. Nothing has left me feeling the empowered level of political efficacy that Washington Week has, and I will miss it for the rest of my life.