

## **Jacob Pearson, MS – 2021**

As I exited the final Zoom call during Washington Week Online, I stared in disbelief at my computer screen. “Hadn’t this week just started?” I thought as I texted my fellow delegates in our group chat. Didn’t I just hear Astronaut Scott Kelley comparing people to molten lava cakes?

In all seriousness, I was extremely honored to be included in the 59<sup>th</sup> United States Senate Youth Program, even if it was virtual. The wonderful organizers of this program set up inspirational speaker after speaker. Each day, I thought that it couldn’t be any better than the day before, and they continued to prove me wrong. From hearing about LGBT rights from Senator Baldwin and having her encourage me to keep fighting for them, to hearing how history is taught by the winners by Senate Historian Dr. Betty Koed, I continued to learn more and more about my government, and how I might fit into it. In particular, one of the most important things I learned from this experience is how to work well with those who don’t have the same beliefs that you do. Sometimes, we think that when people attack our beliefs, they are attacking our person.

My fellow delegates, while not sharing the same beliefs as me at times, never once discouraged me or attacked my character. They became great friends, and some of my biggest supporters. To any that are considering applying to this program, I absolutely encourage you to. I have made lifelong friends, connections, and memories that serve as a building block for my future. During our farewell address by Noah Harris, he told us that “The young people will get us there!” and I know this program has helped me strive for a better tomorrow. As I continue to talk to my fellow delegates, I again and again think of tomorrow, and how we all might fit into it.