

## **Megan Wills, DODEA - 2022**

December 2nd, 2021: I found out I was chosen to represent the Department of Defense Education Activity as one of the 2022 United States Senate Youth Program Delegates. I was called into my high school's main office where I was greeted by my family members, school administrators and teachers, and virtually by DoDEA USSYP panel members and our schools district superintendent. Walking into that room is a moment I will always remember. I was beyond ecstatic and honored to be chosen to participate in the program, representing DoDEA. After notification of my acceptance, I soon got to know my co-delegate who only lived an hour away. It was also around the same time that other delegates from across the U.S. were informed of their selection. Some of us immediately connected and got to know each other.

Before Washington Week, I wasn't sure what to expect, who I was going to meet, and who I was going to be able to potentially ask questions to. After receiving the speaker list for this year's Washington week I was very excited for the speakers and tours and what insight and knowledge they were going to provide for us.

As Washington Week began, I instantly connected with my military mentor group the 'Grizzle Bears!' It was then, I got to meet delegates from all across the U.S. As the week went on our military mentor asked us questions relating to politics and issues that are currently happening in our home state. Delegates were able to share their point of view on politics, which allowed us to see different points of views. I was honored to ask Judge Robert Henry a question and also provide an appreciation speech to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley. One of the speakers I was most excited about was the United States Ambassador to the United Nations and Secretary of Transportation. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield provided a descriptive insight of her job and what that entails, while also instilling in us the importance of foreign relations. Secretary Buttigieg provided us with information regarding transportation system improvements, and what that would look like across the United States, during his Q&A session. One of the biggest surprises was a spontaneous White House Press Office tour from USSYP Alumni Michael Kikukawa. His tour included seeing White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki and seeing the Briefing room.

I look forward to collaborating and staying connected with past and future alumni through the Alumni Association in years to come.