

## **Mahir Rahman, LA – 2022**

“To form a more perfect union...” Many of our speakers at Washington Week emphasized these immortal words from the preamble of the Constitution. When I looked closely at the words of the phrase, I realized that despite the flaws of the United States, we are all working to make the country a better place to live, where opportunity shines.

But “to form a more perfect union” is no easy task at all, especially in divisive times as today. Yet, the mission of the United States Senate Youth Program was to remove these divisions and allow teenagers of different beliefs to come together and learn from the most knowledgeable leaders in different fields, from the fundamentals of justice on the Supreme Court to international security in NATO.

Scrambling to take notes on every single valuable word that these leaders said during one-hour Zoom sessions was hectic, yet at the same extremely rewarding. I have a notebook of around one hundred pages filled with facts about infrastructure in our country interspersed with the advice given to us from senators and other world leaders.

What made my Senate experience so valuable, however, was not just the leaders I was able to hear from. Rather, it was my fellow delegates, who I would join with in Zoom calls lasting hours on end. I was absolutely fascinated by the way that we would talk about our lives at home, with some delegates giving tours of their rooms. Then, automatically, we would enter into intense discussions ranging from Vladimir Putin’s motives in Ukraine or whether universities should continue maintaining a test-optional policy in admissions. It was through these talks that I was able to form important connections, learning from my peers while also having lots of fun.

Apart from the fellow delegates, my meeting with my state’s United States Senator, Bill Cassidy was very impactful. Our meeting was extremely engaging, me and my co-delegate Anil laughing constantly at the remarks he would make. But I was also able to learn an immense amount from our quick twenty-minute session, including how the Senator worked with his staff to work on legislation. I asked him a question about his experience working as a medical doctor aided him in his role as a government official, to which he responded that he looks at policy from a bottom-up approach. He assesses the facts first and then comes to a conclusion. As someone interested in working in healthcare and government, learning about his life journey was very influential, and it just made me more excited to continue working on my passions and trying to help my country.

Therefore, Washington Week as part of the U.S. Senate Youth Program was perhaps the most lively, engaging portion of my life. Learning from important leaders in different fields from the legislative branch to the military, I was able to gain insights into the inner workings of government. I also learned from my fellow co-delegates, understanding their states’ politics while debating on different issues. My Washington Week experience has made me excited to serve the public in the future, working “to form a more perfect union.”