

## **Sarah Yousif, MI – 2024**

“What is it that you plan to do with your one wild precious life.” - Brian Kamoie, 62nd USSYP

Well that’s a pretty big question for a teenager especially one that’s about to have so much change in the next year when they go off to college. I’m glad to say Washington Week helped me answer that question... at least as much as a teenager like me can for now. At the beginning of the week I went in with my own expectations of how I thought the week would unfold, but as soon as our Military Mentors picked us up from the airport I knew it would exceed anything I could imagine.

As I walked into the Mayflower hotel I was met with the unreal class it was filled with. To know that we would be hanging out during nights and eating dinners in the same ballrooms that inaugural balls were held in blew me away. I was set on capturing every moment, and as many of my fellow delegates saw, I decided to vlog the whole week. Editing the video post Washington Week allowed the reality of my experience during it to finally process. From finding out we’d get to watch the State of the Union from the White House to learning that the Pentagon looks slightly like a mall, I was blown away from one moment to the next.

A few moments specifically stood out to me. I have to say a thank you to Donna Lagani for talking to the security so I could get a photo with Pete Buttigieg when he was our breakfast speaker. The night prior I got a message from my Military Mentor saying I would be seated at table 1 because of my Michigan relation to the secretary. I quickly called my co-delegate and I can tell you my roommate had to cover her ears from us screaming in excitement. Pete provided us with insight into transportation but also advice that’ll stick with me for a lifetime.

Along with the infamous Secretary of Transportation giving us notable advice, I got to meet my one of my inspirations Judy Woodruff. I’ve always been a big fan of those who paved the way for women in the broadcast industry and at the top of that list for me was Judy. When I first saw our speakers list I was over the moon, it literally brought tears to my eyes. They say you should never meet those who inspire you because they may let you down, but meeting Ms. Woodruff did not. Even though I was not one of the delegates introducing her, after hearing how much she meant to me throughout the whole week, Ms. Guilford pulled me out into the hallway to meet her with the delegates from Rhode Island. I appreciated Ryan and Dominic’s willingness to let me share this moment with them. Getting to tell her how much she inspires me as a woman in broadcast was an unforgettable experience. Before the week began, I had always pushed the idea of going into broadcast to the side. By the end of the week I texted my mother telling her this is what I want to do with my life. That may change later on but I’m thankful Washington Week provided me with clarity and ignited my passion. From moments like these to getting to tell the White House Press Secretary I want to have her role one day, I was in awe the whole Washington Week.

My reflection of the week would not be complete without mentioning my fellow delegates and my military mentor. At the beginning of the week, we were told each coach would be competing for a spirit award. We were tasked with picking a leader to help the entire bus come up with some type of presentation to recap the week. My team for some odd reason decided to

go with my idea to change the lyrics to Alexander Hamilton. It honestly became a diss track and some point and we even gave two delegates, Wright and Josh, a duet. After seeing the other two coaches' wholesome performances of Party in the USA and Take Me Home Country Road, my group exchanged looks and came to the conclusion we took the assignment in a bit of a different route. I'm thankful for being picked as a leader for this and even though no one could probably hear the lyrics because we couldn't stop laughing, it will go down as one of the funniest events I've experienced. It still makes me laugh rewatching the video of Wright and Josh falling on the floor from laughing instead of giving their duet.

My military mentor group is getting their own paragraph because of how special they are to me. Not only did she make sure had our IDs every morning and make the experience stress free, Captain Durbin also went above and beyond in making a personal connection to each of us in the group. Though she may not have been fond of the name we picked for our group (Durbin Dynasty), I couldn't thank her more for honestly becoming such a big role model to me. The same goes for my group as well. From the first ice breaker to our daily mirror selfies, I appreciate and am honored to have met every single one of you. Durbin Dynasty Forever!