

## **Jackson Bost, GA – 2024**

As I sat at my desk, planning out how I should write this essay, I figured my journal from Washington Week would be a good place to start. In flipping through those precious pages, scribbles and diplomacy simulation notes throughout them, I saw the fairness of today and the bright promise of tomorrow: America's present and future. Over the span of just one single, tiny week caught up in the blur of my senior year, the United States Senate Youth Program was certainly the most transformative week of my life and (while I hope I do not peak now) will stand supreme to any other. Through the words and challenges of profound figures, the laughs and compassion of young leaders, and a sense of awe only found in Washington, I now have the privilege of bearing the wisdom of the nation's finest and will never be far from the finest friends, no matter when or where I happen to be.

Heading into Washington Week, I was beyond excited over the chance to meet today's headliners from the national stage, individuals who will have statues of them years down the road and, frankly, deserve to now. If the speaker list sent to us the week prior was all we ended up seeing, I would have felt like I was given the keys to the country. These extraordinary individuals, though, ended up giving me the keys to the world. Whether it was our impressive Military Mentors, the wonderful JB, or the countless other luminaries throughout the week, I was in constant admiration of their bouts with unimaginable adversity, their unbridled grit in the arena, and their desire to pass on such wisdom to us. Out of all of these remarkable people, however, one speaker—someone who I had very unfairly glanced over when first reading that list—stood out above the rest: Mr. Brian Kamoie. His speech alone impeccably summarized our position and duty as Americans, global citizens, and, quite simply, good people. After his experience working in everything from the White House to private consulting, from Fukushima to Deepwater Horizon, Mr. Kamoie knew what it meant to command from the helm, commit to service, stand proud, devote to learning, and leave a lasting difference in “one wild, precious life.” One of the final points that he left with us, I believe, was the most essential idea of Washington Week: “Those who are crazy enough to think they can change the world actually do.” Mr. Kamoie has certainly proven how it can be done, and it was all the more inspiring with his final position, Senate Youth Alumni. Because of him, I know there will always be good, honest work to be done regardless of title and standing, for such trivial things will never stop a fine person from championing a noble cause.

It also just so happened that I was joined by 103 of those fine people for Washington Week, and it is a distinct honor of mine to call these upstanding, funny, brilliant, and wild delegates my friends. At my school, if politics is not being ignored, it is usually being tensely discussed or argued over, so I approached Washington Week with some concern that the same situation would play out. Now, I am wondering how I ever could have thought that would be the case; the delegates handled such touchy and challenging topics from national and local realms with careful consideration of all viewpoints, concerns, and expertise—their character would have allowed for nothing less. Whether it was casual conversations on the bus or our critical diplomacy simulation, they so humbly flashed their genius and endeavored to incorporate an opposing opinion if it meant a better outcome. In such a similar fashion, the delegates

welcomed me as though I were a long-lost friend. Some of my favorite moments of Washington Week were the little things: playing Heads Up and cards in the mezzanine, my mentor group camping out in each other's rooms way later than we needed to be, taking over the Grand Ballroom every evening, and randomly belting "Take Me Home, Country Roads." These outstanding leaders so eloquently reminded me of the integral importance of listening, working till the sun comes up, advocating for the betterment of all over self, and, as our many speakers displayed, how to stay a modest human in the process. They have thrown gasoline on the fire and made my passion for service burn higher and brighter than I thought possible, and, alongside them, I am positive that we will be leaving a mark on the world the size of our hearts.

In summary, the United States Senate Youth Program and Washington Week was, to quote Miley Cyrus and our astounding Coach Two performance, a "party in the USA." In all seriousness, however, I owe an immeasurable debt to all involved in making this week the marvel it was. From Mount Vernon to the White House, the Senate to Arlington, every tour and experience was a testament to the progress derived from zealous service and ultimate sacrifices. Speakers from every venue illustrated the demands of their crucial roles in our great nation and the good that comes of it. Then, the delightful delegates made me even more eager to better my local, state, national, and global community, their intellect and support backing me all the way. As I head out into the great wide open to make something of that "wild, precious life," I will always carry that journal; its blend of wisdom and compassion will always remind me of how I must serve and the people I will serve with.