

Vivian Reyes, GA – 2025

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

This quote was repeated by nearly every official we encountered during Washington Week, and it was true.

If there's one thing I took away from this experience, it's that my fellow delegates are the future leaders who will one day serve in all three branches of government. Each brought something special—passion, humor, or wisdom beyond their years. Soon enough, we'll be standing in front of the podium as speakers, welcoming the next class of the United States Senate Youth Program delegates, sharing our experience, and carrying on the legacy of inspiring others to understand that this is public service, not self-service.

The beauty of our unity first unfolded on March 1st, when we finally met in person. Excitement filled the entire room each time a new delegate group opened the door with their luggage, and we matched an Instagram profile picture to the person standing before us. I tried to capture as many moments as possible with my (often questioned) Osmo Pocket camera. Looking back at those videos now, I wish we had more time. Even though our days were packed with activities, conversations, and unforgettable speakers, it never felt like enough when surrounded by people who truly *get* you. One of my favorite memories was trying the most iconic Capitol Hill cake and documenting everyone's outfits for the @ussypfashiondivas account! I will say that Brian Kamoie's (USSYP—PA 1989) outfit was tough to beat.

As I flip through my journal pages, I reflect on the speakers who felt like reflections of my own story—a rural-town Mexican girl with dreams of impacting society. Ms. Michelle Exner and Secretary Marco Rubio from the U.S. Department of State spoke about their pride in their Hispanic heritage and commitment to serving this nation. Secretary Rubio left us with a message that resonated with me:

"Once you find something you're good at and love—you've found your calling."

That moment made me pause. I thought about the generations who came before me—my ancestors, my parents—who sacrificed so much, faced countless challenges, yet never stopped dreaming. Because of their resilience, I can fight for what is right.

When Ana Luisa Fajer spoke at the United States Institute of Peace, she did so with grace, power, and pride—embodying the values of a proud Mexican woman. As she spoke, I saw myself in her presence, her poise, and her purpose. I was deeply moved by every word she said. And it was then that I found my calling: to serve others under two flags and honor those who came before me. We are better when unified.

Although I never understood why past delegates spoke about how profoundly this experience impacted them in such a short time, I do now. I will forever be grateful to have met these 103 extraordinary individuals—and finally, I know someone from every state and beyond. I hope to see future Georgians carry on the legacy of passionately serving others in the beautiful state we call home.

As our time together is over, we will forever be the fashion divas and leadership nerds—and I wouldn't have it any other way.