

## **Sriya Munjuluri, IA – 2026**

*“When people come together with a purpose, nothing is impossible.”*

When I first arrived in Washington, D.C. for Washington Week, those words felt like an idea rather than a truth. I stepped into a room of unfamiliar faces, carrying a quiet mix of anticipation and uncertainty, unaware that I was entering a space where purpose would take shape in ways I had never experienced before. On the very first day, a keynote speaker told us that this week would be life changing. At the time, it felt like a bold promise for something so brief. Now, I understand that when people are brought together not just by ambition, but by shared purpose, even a single week can transform the way you see the world.

What made this experience extraordinary was not simply where we went or who we encountered, but the connections we formed along the way. In my Military Mentor group, I found myself surrounded by young leaders who were thoughtful, driven, and deeply compassionate. Though we came from different states, backgrounds, and stories, there was an unspoken understanding that connected us instantly. In those moments, I began to see that leadership is not defined by standing apart, but by standing together. It is built through shared growth, mutual encouragement, and the willingness to uplift one another.

Throughout the week, we heard from remarkable leaders, including a Supreme Court Justice, and met elected officials who are shaping the future of our nation. We stood in places that carry the weight of history, such as Arlington National Cemetery, where the meaning of service and sacrifice felt deeply present. We explored spaces that reflect innovation and possibility, like NASA’s flight center, where the future seemed both vast and within reach. Yet, for all the significance of these experiences, it was often the quieter moments that left the deepest impact. Conversations over breakfast, reflections during lunch, and late night discussions became spaces where ideas were shared freely, where uncertainty was met with understanding, and where purpose began to take form.

Those conversations changed me. They made me realize that the future is not something far away or out of reach. It is being shaped right now, in rooms like the one I walked into on the first day, by people who truly care, who take the time to listen, and who lead with both confidence and compassion. This week did more than inspire me. It instilled in me a sense of responsibility to carry that purpose forward, to contribute meaningfully, and to lead in a way that reflects both passion and integrity.

More than anything, Washington Week gave me a community that I know will continue to shape my journey. These are people who will challenge me to think deeper, support me when I need it most, and remind me of the person I strive to become. Though our paths may diverge, the foundation we built together will remain.

There are moments from this week that I will carry with me long after it has ended. I will always remember hearing “delegates and distinguished guests” echo through each meal, a phrase that made every moment feel significant. I will miss being surrounded by individuals whose passion and drive pushed me to grow. And most of all, I will miss the moments of formed friendships, the laughter, the late-night conversations, the constant karaoke, the bus rides filled with games and stories, and the moments spent getting to know one another. In those moments, we found a sense of belonging.

The places we visited were meaningful, but it was the people who brought this experience to life. I arrived in Washington, D.C. with uncertainty, but I left with clarity. I left with a stronger sense of purpose, a deeper understanding of leadership, and 104 new friends who remind me that when people come together with purpose, anything is possible.