

Ethan Morgan, KY – 2026

I remember the first time I had ever heard of the United States Senat Youth Program from a blog post by my counselor. After reading into it I knew that acceptance into this program would be a dream come true. Coming from a kid infatuated with American History and Politics, just the mere fact of meeting some of the most notable governmental figures in our country was going to be monumental.

This first memory I had is the plane ride to D.C. I was reading Sen. McConnell's autobiography to read up on some of his experiences...I'm a quick study. I remember trying to envision what my fellow delegates would look like, and would they think I'm funny, or would we click? Or would I be lost with no Military Mentors to be found? I remember all of those fears faded into pure excitement when I spotted my fellow delegate Patrick, who I had been in contact with before the trip, walking near the baggage claim. He was walking with Ohio's delegate Grant Hubley and not far behind them was Major Daniel Jin-Su Sprouse who was swift with a handshake and a warm smile to ease my anxiousness.

As I'm writing this, I try to call back upon things I wished I had known before going. I would say as an ambitious guy, the imposter syndrome was a real thing. Many people and talked about it the first day of our program... and me and my egotistical self-thought "Oh surely not... not me! Not Ethan Morgan, I'm always comfortable in my own skin." That was not the case just the very next day, after talking to many fellow delegates and relaxing, this truly was the 104 brightest civically minded Juniors and Seniors in the entire country gathered in the Mayflower Hotel, I finally realized I was a big fish in a little pond who just got thrown into the Atlantic Ocean. I remember talking to my fellow delegates and being one of the only ones not going to an Ivy League Institution or applying to a college with a 10% acceptance rate or less. But, over the week after getting to know everyone and have genuine conversations, and plenty of well-intentioned compliments that I did belong, and could make an impact. Before you go, understand you should be there.

My mind also goes to my Military Mentor Captain Blake Bohlman and my hall mates. From the very beginning we had nicknames for one another, mine being affectionally Colonel, for my Bluegrass roots and KFC. That group of guys all different races, religions, and political affiliation were thick as thieves. All it took was the yell of a call sign for heads all across rooms to turn to one another, and all led by the best Military Mentor who was just a few years older than us, made the trip, making him a mentor and a friend that I could genuinely look up to as a man in uniform in service for our country.

The key memory, I must be honest with you, wasn't getting to network with my Senators and their staff in the halls of the Russell and Hart Senate Buildings or even listening to Justice Jackson in the Court. It was laughing in the halls with two of my fellow delegates outside of the Supreme Court. It was a moment in which solemnness or at least silence was preferable but for whatever reason all we could do was snicker and laugh. Much to the chagrin of our Military Mentors, we couldn't stop laughing. I couldn't tell you the substance of those jokes, but I do remember the feeling I had and the connections I made. There is no doubt that this trip solidified my resolve of public service and Federal service at that. There will never be trip like it in your life. You will also have melancholy for about a week when you get back. You'll miss the fine three-course meals every night, keynote speakers by Senators, or the best views in the city with the most consecrated and concentrated power in the world. But what you'll also have taken away is the connections of well-esteemed peers, memories of laughs, handshakes, and smiles between you and your Senators, and of course a new and revived sense of patriotic duty to our Country and a deep and passionate zeal of public service no doubt.