

Roman Kozminski, MI – 2026

When I arrived in Washington DC, I was excited for a week of political discussion, meeting Senators, and getting to see the sights of the nation's capital. Much to my dismay, however, the airline had lost my suit bag, immediately catapulting my emotions of elation into the depths of anxiety. I walked through the airport, on the verge of shutting down from emotional overwhelmedness, calling my parents to tell them the perfect week I had waited so long for was already falling apart. But little did I know, the week was far from over, and all the amazing people at Washington Week would ensure that was the case.

First, the amazing staff from the Hearst Foundations. Mrs. Wilk and JB made sure the week was off to a great start. JB lent me some of his own suits and Mrs. Wilk did everything in her power to ensure my suits made it to DC as soon as possible. They planned some of the most amazing events I've ever been to, and the way they were able to tie all of the delegates in was truly amazing. I personally had a chance to provide remarks of thanks for Ambassador Chindawongse from Thailand, and I got to eat dinner with him. Having the opportunity to discuss geopolitics, diplomacy, and life in general with one of the most interesting men I've ever met was truly special.

Next, the Military Mentors really tied Washington Week together and provided some of the most memorable insights. My Military Mentor, Major Cale Barber, created a sense of fellowship among our group, the Barbershop (the best military mentor group, in case you were wondering), that made developing friendships so easy. He made sure everything ran smoothly and that everyone had anything and everything they needed. After I lost my suits, he worked closely with Mrs. Wilk and JB to make sure everything got to the hotel and he provided continuous updates. The other Military Mentors, too, made the experience special. Discussing things like military morality, the nature of command, the war in Iran, and private defense with the other delegates and actual military officers was so interesting, and I had a chance to hear perspectives I'd never been exposed to in depth.

Last but certainly not least, the delegates. The 103 other delegates are what made Washington Week the best week of my life. From the very first day, getting to meet all of the varied and unique delegates from across the country and world was absolutely amazing. Having people to share the amazing moments with was deeply impactful. From piano sing-alongs in the ballroom to late night policy debates, getting to spend a week with some of the coolest people I've ever met was truly amazing. Even beyond Washington Week, our weekend zoom calls, group chat, and official connections have allowed us to stay in touch as friends who are looking forward to watching each other succeed. All of the delegates were genuinely some of the most talented people I've ever met, and I am so proud to say I served as a delegate with them.