

Grant Hubley, OH – 2026

Going into Washington Week, I was anxious. From traveling to a new place, meeting strangers, and spending a week listening to high-ranking speakers, I was not only excited but a little afraid. This nervousness melted away as soon as I arrived in DC.

I have always been a shy person who takes a moment to open up to new people. As soon as I stepped off the plane to meet the military mentors, I was greeted with smiles and handshakes. From then on, I was surrounded by some of the most passionate young leaders I have ever had the pleasure of meeting.

The presentations were kicked off with Bill Doherty co-founder of Braver Angels, a nonprofit organization focusing on defeating political polarization. This was a perfect way to start the week. His training highlighted how important it is for Americans to find common ground. His message translated directly into the next seven days. From speaking with Senator Katie Britt, Senator Ed Markey, and Senator Tammy Baldwin, I never felt as though delegates interjected political opinions. We were all united in the same belief: America can and will have a brighter future. Through the challenging questions asked by speakers, to the complicated group discussion points, I was encouraged to think outside of the box that I am used to living in. Each speaker provided a different perspective on governance, media, and society at large.

My favorite speaker from Washington Week was Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown-Jackson. As soon as she started speaking, I had goosebumps. I have never been in the same room as someone as influential, knowledgeable, and poised as Justice Jackson. From constitutional law to her time on Broadway, the delegates offered complex questions. However, every inquiry had an extremely poised and well-thought out response. After the hour with Justice Jackson, I felt like I wanted to change my college major and become a defender of the Constitution. As I reflect on her presentation in Washington Week, that is not the right decision. Her message was extremely clear: you don't have to study constitutional law to support rule of law in our country. This value is defended in every day life, through all careers and walks of life. I left that presentation reassured that our democracy is in safe hands, regardless of political strife.

Washington Week was my first time in DC, so experiencing the inner workings of our national government was inspiring. From seeing the Declaration of Independence at the Archives to eating lunch at the State Department or paying respect at the Arlington National Cemetery, I never realized the sheer magnitude of American culture represented in Washington, DC. My inner history buff was finally satisfied, as I was finally able to create connections with my class work back in Ohio to the history in front of my eyes.

From singing a lullaby with my fellow delegates led by Dr. Alveda King (MLK's niece), to playing card games, and yelling chants on the coaches, I left DC with 104 new friends who were ready to take on the world. The United States Senate Youth Program is the most impactful program I have ever had the privilege to be a part of, and I cannot wait to see how the 64th class cultivates a brighter future for America