

Binyam Dunne, TN – 2026

I've been thinking a lot about what to write in this reflection. Do I talk about how amazing it was to be in the same room as the highest ranking officer of the United States Military? Do I mention the songs we sang on the coaches to each event? Do I describe how cool it was to eat a cake in the shape of the Capitol—I mean, a cake in any unique shape is impressive...but the Capitol? Truly sensational.

Despite my temptation to talk about many of the awe-inspiring and unique moments from the trip, I want to talk about what will stick with me the most: the bonds I formed with the other 104 wonderful delegates. It's rare to find a group of peers who are kind, curious, and welcoming, and have a slight hyper fixation on politics. Without these amazing people, my takeaways from the speakers wouldn't have been as rich. I wouldn't have been pushed to think as deeply or as broadly. Long story short, these people are extraordinary, and I feel so grateful for the opportunity to have spent such a magical week with them.

As Andy Bernard says in my favorite TV show, *The Office*, "I wish there was a way to know you're in the good ol' days before you've actually left them." Senate Youth felt like a blip in time that passed all too quickly. It felt like my Mentor Group had just started feeling truly a family when we had to all depart back to wherever we called home. I felt like the group of us who were proud to call Coach #1 *our* Coach had become a team with chemistry that's off the charts. When everyone was dancing on the final night in the lower level of the ballroom, it felt like the capstone to a perfect week. But I didn't realize that I was in the good ol' days. Because when I boarded the flight home, I kept thinking back to the dance floor—to the people that I learned how to line dance from.

I quickly realized that I had taken the time for granted. I could go on and on about how fascinating each speaker and site we visited was. I'm sure one of my co-delegates will paint a great picture of the events of the week. But it felt more fitting to talk about the thing that continues to make me smile to this day—the thing that I hope to visit very soon: the community of wonderfully impactful leaders who have left an unforgettable impact on me.

Until then, I'll keep trying to soak up those good ol' days!