

## Quincy Sabick, VT – 2026

When my flight touched down in Washington, D.C., I had many assumptions about what the United States Senate Youth Program would bring. I had already decided which speakers I was most excited to hear from and had begun to plan questions that I felt struck a balance between sounding educated without being overly arrogant. What I did not expect was the lessons the program would teach me that go beyond topics of government and service. It's these lessons that stand out most in my mind after Washington Week.

When I think of my favorite moments from USSYP, I always come back to my conversation with Elizabeth Macdonough, the Senate Parliamentarian, and my introduction of her that I shared with my co-delegate. Her genuine curiosity about our lives growing up in Vermont almost made me forget that she holds one of the most important nonpartisan roles in Congress. That five-minute conversation was the first of many times during USSYP that I came to realize that even with power and rank, the people in these positions are ultimately just as human as any delegate in the program. Their accolades and titles are impressive and hard-earned, but behind the position, there is a refreshing humanity.

I saw this again when we heard from Charles Bolden while eating dessert in the National Air and Space Museum. He spoke of the meaningless nature of national borders when sharing a spacecraft with his fellow astronauts, and how he learned to look past language or background to see his fellow astronauts as humans first. I felt myself tear up as the Major General, who had flown numerous space missions and been in charge of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, was moved to tears while speaking about the immense impact his late parents had on him. In that moment, his career and legacy were forgotten, and he spoke to us as human beings.

These two moments stand out among all others when I remember my time at the United States Senate Youth Program. Not because they were particularly flashy, but because they showed me a new perspective on what it means to be successful. Elizabeth Macdonough and Charles Bolden inspired me to approach conversations with my fellow delegates and all my peers beyond the program with humanity and humility. This is a lesson that I know will stay with me for many years to come.