

Britt Leake, KS – 2015

It is impossible for me to describe in words how incredible Washington Week was for me. The sheer scope of everything that we did – from visiting all of the monuments, visiting NASA, the Departments of State and Defense, seeing the National Symphony, having dinner with the Constitution, and, of course, meeting President Obama – still amazes me. It's almost too much for me to think of at once. When I talked to my parents and teachers, I often forgot to mention one thing that we did (say, dining at the National Archives or seeing the National Symphony) and I would have to go back to them the next day to tell them!

Washington Week had a profound impact on me as a person. Hearing from so many amazing public servants inspired me to pursue my own dreams of working for our government. President Obama's talk on the challenges that he felt were most significant to my generation – climate change, wealth disparity, and interethnic/religious harmony – was as informative as it was fascinating. Senator Manchin's stories from his own life and his advice for us reinforced for me the importance of sincerity and selflessness not only in public service, but in life in general. Throughout the week, I saw parts of our government that most people will never see in a lifetime. I feel that I left Washington with a more profound appreciation for the work our government does, and even a little more pride in being an American. I am still amazed by the other delegates – their backgrounds, ideas, accomplishments, and goals still astound and inspire me. It was wonderful being able to meet people that are as passionate about politics as I am, and over the course of the week I forged friendships that I hope will last a lifetime.