

David Rivero, NM – 2016

“Don’t worry so much about what you want to be; worry about what you want to do, and everything will fall into place” – President Barack Obama

As one of tomorrow’s young promising leaders, I have always strived to not only set high standards, but to also exceed those, not merely for my benefit, but by having my actions inspire others to learn and become more. This past March these high standards were echoed throughout the best week of my life thus far.

The United States Senate Youth Program supports students such as myself by reinforcing the importance of the path we choose to follow and also by helping us set guidelines that will encourage and enable us to reach the goals we set forth. USSYP is a once in a lifetime educational experience that enhances one’s knowledge and exposes an individual leader to new depths of leadership. This meritorious program affords new leader participants a humbling, eye-opening, informative, and life-changing experience. The opportunities provided are endless and validate delegates’ desire to serve and lead their schools, communities, and nation. Challenge-driven students who are able to participate in the United States Senate Youth Program not only benefit from a first-hand look into our nation’s capital and politics, but also from the learning and understanding of the designs which currently drive our institutions.

Great leaders flourish by participating in distinguished programs such as the United States Senate Youth Program. Most leaders gain insight through hands-on experience, which impacts individuals by enhancing their ability to work with others. A great leader should be able to respect various perspectives including those that differ from their own in order to successfully collaborate with their peers and lead a team. Although there is no perfect blueprint to prosper as a leader, one must have the desire, and willpower, to strive to attain knowledge that will bring about positive changes once that leader is in a position of power. On a personal note, this program allowed me to gain connections with 103 other delegates from across the nation. I absolutely loved every single aspect of Washington Week - from the speakers to the food and everything in between, my week was perfect. My experience serves as the precedence on which my future goals and aspirations will be based on, as well as have a lasting impact on my view of public service.

To the upcoming class of 2017:

I would first like to congratulate you on your selection to represent your state. When I was tasked with writing a reflection on my time in D.C., I found myself overwhelmed. I gave into procrastination until the very last minute because I knew it was going to be difficult for me to get my true thoughts and feelings on paper.

As mentioned before, Washington Week has been the best week of my life thus far, and if given the opportunity, I would do it all over again. With that being said, I offer a few words of wisdom.

When you arrive in Washington, D.C. make it a point to meet as many people as you possibly can – and by meet I mean value. Value every single person you meet whether it is a fellow delegate, military mentor, or USSYP staff. Value these people because they can offer much more than you anticipate. During the week try your hardest to leave behind your life back home to really gain from your experience. Instead of focusing on updating your Facebook page, tweeting, snapchatting, or instagramming, focus on having a conversation with a fellow delegate on the road to the next destination. And lastly, ask questions! Throughout my Washington Week, we had the opportunity to ask some of the well-respected officials we met a few questions. Unfortunately, I didn’t ask any questions because I felt as if my questions were too simple or unintelligent, but as we were told in one of the great speeches given throughout the week, “someone, somewhere saw something in each and every one of you”, so don’t feel intimidated as I once was. Take this advice and have the best week of your lives too!

To the class of 2016:

In life we are occasionally fortunate enough to meet certain people who make a positive impact on our lives. This past March, not only did I meet 103 of these people, but we also shared a week filled with the most amazing experiences life can offer! From getting advice from President Obama and hearing from Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg to dining next to the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights, Washington Week has been the best week of my life thus far!

There isn't a day that goes by that I am not reminded of the United States Senate Youth Program, therefore I am so thankful to have been a part of USSYP'16 with all of you guys and cannot thank y'all enough. So to sum it all up, a million times thank you. Thank you for blowing up my phone at all hours of the day and keeping me entertained with the group message. Thank you for allowing me to listen to your stories, and thank you for listening to mine. It was an honor to spend time with our nation's finest future leaders. I hope to hear phenomenal things from each and every one of you in the future and cannot wait until our paths cross again!

P.S. Oh, and I hope each and every one of you enjoyed your New Mexico state flag pins!