

Quinn Favret, MI – 2018

Quite frankly, I am not even sure how to begin describing my experience as a part of the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP). As I sit here going into my fourth hour of brainstorming how to accurately convey the atmosphere of Washington Week, I have come to the conclusion that it is not possible, but here is my best shot at it.

I was nervous as I stepped off the plane at Washington-Reagan airport. What were the other delegates going to be like? I actually wasn't selected by mistake? I sat down on an airport bench next to Luke Tillitski, the North Carolina delegate, and we immediately connected and began making fun of each other's southern and Michigander accents. This was the first of many friendships I made, and signified the start of a life-changing week.

Washington Week had the most unique dynamic of anything I have ever been to. Imagine walking down the bustling streets of D.C. flanked by uniformed military officers, on our way to meet with the president of the United States. As a high schooler, I was star struck; doesn't every other high school student aspire to meet members of the government? USSYP is an all access pass to the American government, and granted me an inside view to our democratic process.

I distinctly remember eagerly waiting in the East Room of the White House for President Trump to walk in. All of the sudden the room fell dead silent and the massive wood doors slid open. President Trump and Vice President Pence were walking down the red carpeted hallway smiling and laughing. President Trump cupped his mouth and yelled to us, "What a great looking group!" continuing to say, "Mike, don't you wish you were their age?" Through the course of the meeting, Melania Trump also made a celebrity appearance and President Trump told us national news about North Korea before it was released. It is moments like these that I will never forget.

When someone asks me about Washington Week, I always talk about the big events—meeting Congressman John Lewis, taking a selfie with Senator Bernie Sanders, greeting the president, or asking Justice Gorsuch a question. Ironically though, I would say that the best part of my week was the little things. From joking around with the Canadian Ambassador about maple syrup at dinner, to discussing classical novels at Mount Vernon, to the Military Mentors ritual use of the word "tracking," it is these small moments that defined my experience.

I came into Washington Week concerned with the partisan state of this nation, and I left feeling inspired over the future of this country. My 103 co-delegates astounded me with their maturity in debating complex and differing views, often times coming up with a middle road solution. Senator Tim Scott said how "by looking for common ground, you can make uncommon progress" and that is exactly what this group did. I am excited to see the future of my co-delegates, and see the impact they make on not only their community, but our country.

This unparalleled week has changed my life and provided me with memories and friendships that will last a lifetime, and for that, I am beyond grateful.