

Avram Salzman, AK – 2019

Before I arrived in D.C. I was fully convinced that a mistake had been made. I did not belong there - thousands of miles away with no mountains, forests, or ocean. A sample of some of the greatest young minds in the country. I was out of my element, literally. As the week progressed, however, I came to understand that I was exactly where I needed to be. I was with a group of fiercely passionate, driven students with one goal on their minds: make the world a better place.

Before arriving in D.C. I thought that Chief Justice John Roberts was going to descend from the ceiling of the Supreme Court. I thought that every senator we heard from was going to be paraded in on a throne. I learned, though, that every one of these individuals, no matter how many heads they could turn, was still a breather, an eater, a walker, and a human. While their words were powerful and filled with wisdom, they consistently reminded us that they had started with exactly the same goal in mind: make the world a better place.

Before arriving in D.C. I had the idea that members of the military sought nothing more than guns, violence, and blind patriotism. Quickly, I realized just how wrong I was. Every single Military Mentor that accompanied us through our week was kind, disciplined, selfless, and intelligent. They stayed up later than us, and got up earlier, to ensure that things went smoothly. They imparted wisdom and demonstrated utmost care for us. Each military mentor joined the service with a noble goal: make the world a better place.

Before arriving in D.C. I knew how to talk *about* bipartisanship. After hours upon hours of discussion and debate with delegates from 50 different states, I learned how to talk *with* bipartisanship. From late night conversations about broad political topics, to pointed discussion of issues affecting people's towns and states, I came to understand the importance of keeping an open mind, listening more than I speak, and never jumping to conclusions. Despite impassioned debate, and 360 degrees of disagreement, we all shared a goal, and were willing to work tirelessly to achieve it: make the world a better place.

Before I arrived in D.C. my thoughts about what I was about to experience were essentially one big misconception. A week of anything, even as comprehensive as this one, will never be able to fully remedy all of my misconceptions. Washington Week, however, gave me the tools with which to continue educating myself, and energetically pursue my own goal: to make the world a better place.