

Ethan Wearner, CO – 2019

I remember growing up, and even more now, how much I loved Star Wars. It seemed like every day my parents demanded that I quit attempting to emulate Darth Vader's intimidating force choke. For me, Star Wars has always been a mysterious universe in which I could envision myself possessing extraordinary powers. Like Star Wars, I hold the United States Senate Youth Program in a similar regard. The United States Senate Youth Program is an unimaginable realm in which the country's brightest students are collectively assembled to get a taste of life in the political limelight. It is, for one extraordinary week, like jumping into the Millennium Falcon, blasting into light speed and witnessing an expansive political universe.

Indeed, immediately after my flight landed in Washington, D.C. I felt like the Emperor himself. I was provided with private escorts, a security service, and other luxurious accommodations. For a brief moment, I was no longer Ethan Wearner the high school senior, I was Ethan Wearner, president of the United States. To my pleasure, the rest of the week produced similar sensations. Having premier access to the government's highest-ranking officials is an honor I will never forget.

The highlight of my week was meeting President Trump. I don't necessarily agree with some of the president's policies nor do I consider him an upstanding human being, but his presence was intoxicating. To see the man that is talked about each night on my television screen appear before me caught me off guard. Immediately I noticed how effective the president is at rallying a crowd. He walked out and, in a manner characteristic of President Trump started his slow clapping with a grin. His candidness made even those opposed to the president giggle, smile, or cheer. Being in the White House was also a dream come true. The aura of the presidency, the history of the White House, and President Trump's alacritous approach left me in sheer awe - as if I had come to witness the descension of an immortal being.

The week was so amazing that I could have written a senior thesis on any one of the events I attended. I did notice, however, that one piece of advice that each guest speaker gave us was to be humble. Humility is key, especially in the political realm. Our guest speakers also encouraged us to be conscientious citizens, serve our local community, and inspire grassroots movements. I will remember these tidbits of advice for the rest of my life. Overall, the United States Senate Youth Program not only made me a better person, but it also inspired me to chase that "political galaxy" far, far away.