

## **Eli Blaufuss, KS – 2019**

There's no feeling in the world like opening up a mail delivery envelope to find a folder containing a letter of congratulations for being accepted to the 57th annual United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP).

Actually, scratch that, there's no feeling in the world like being in the Supreme Court and having the chief justice of the United States take an hour and half of your questions.

Sorry, but scratch that too. There's no feeling in the world like delivering a speech in the Benjamin Franklin state dining room to introduce your former congressman and the current Secretary of State.

Forget all of that, I can definitively say there is NO feeling in the world like being able to walk freely around the White House and then meeting the president of the United States in the East Room.

Or how about we just combine them all together into a true and all-encompassing statement? There is no experience in the world like the United States Senate Youth Program. It is impossible to explain to those who have not been a delegate to USSYP what it's really like to be in our nation's capital for a week with 103 other of our nation's brightest young political minds. I have been asked over and over again after I returned home about what it was like, and I have yet to give a sufficient answer to that question. No matter how long of an answer I give, no matter how many details I go into, no matter how hard I try, I can't capture that feeling of first walking into the Mayflower Hotel and seeing all of your fellow delegates already conversing and acting as if though they'd known each other for years. Without any prompting, you could sit down at a table with them, engage in conversation, and feel at home with your fellow delegates.

Washington Week allowed me to view a number of perspectives I had not been exposed to in my everyday life. My fellow delegates challenged each other's political views and beliefs, and there was never a shortage of lively discussion on today's most controversial of political topics. Perhaps most striking about these exchanges was the amount of civility that was always present. Even if the two sides were on the complete opposite sides of the spectrum, there was always an incredible amount of respect and understanding, and if there was no agreement to be reached, they agreed to disagree and held no grudge.

During Washington Week, I've never felt more simultaneously out of my element and more united. I was in Washington D.C. with people who felt the same passion for politics and governance that I did, and yet they all felt so qualified, so dedicated, so intelligent, and so inspiring. If I am ever concerned about our nation's future or the direction of our country, all I have to do is to remember the other delegates from USSYP and realize that they are the future of our society. The young men and women that the United States Senate Youth Program assembled in Washington D.C. are the best and brightest that our nation has to offer, and I can say without any doubts or reservations that as long as my fellow delegates and I continue our dedication to public service and the goodwill of the nation, a bright future lies ahead.