

## Grace Kosco, OH – 2019

The truth of the matter is this: I'm grateful. I'm grateful to the Hearst Foundations for giving me and my fellow delegates the opportunity. I'm grateful to those who planned the schedule; what a packed and awe-inspiring schedule it was! I'm grateful to the Military Mentors who taught us about respect, discipline, community, and fun. I'm grateful to the busy people with important lives who took the time out of their day to talk to us and allowed us the opportunity to talk to them, for we were all overflowing with questions. I'm grateful for the food that made me scoff at family-style, beautiful photos that captured the magic, and my mile-long list of books people mentioned that I now must read. Most of all, I am grateful to my fellow delegates.

Although we got in many debates, as is our nature, they treated everyone with respect and dignity. Never have I met such a passionate group of teens with so many amazing tips on AP tests, ACT prep, and college admissions. The United States Senate Youth Program was, in a word, life-changing. From walking the hallowed halls of the Supreme Court, to exploring the Library of Congress, and through shaking President Trump's hand as someone rebutted with, "Kamala Harris," each moment was magical, each second inspiring. Those moments will live on in our collective memory as we follow the road less traveled towards public service. Even more important than the memories are the friendships, all of which will live on till we go head to head on Capitol Hill, and I have faith even most will survive that.

When I received the news in December that I was chosen for the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP), I had no idea of the consequences that would come; and what amazing consequences to face! I am, therefore, also grateful to where I came from for getting me to Washington. It was a long, hard road but without a doubt one worth travelling. I listened and learned, I prayed and studied, I hoped and dreamed, for this chance, this gift, this encounter with the world, and now that it has come and gone all I can say is thank you.