

Navkiran Chima, OH – 2019

When I first found out I had been chosen as a delegate I had no idea what to expect during Washington Week, it was after all so far away. When I left home on March 2nd, I found myself anxious, excited, and fearful of the different scenarios I had created in my head. Driving to the airport, sitting in the terminal, meeting my co-delegate, and reading through my one-hour flight had only amplified my nerves. However, when I approached baggage claim and saw Captain Prashar and Lieutenant Platt, my anxiety and fear disappeared. As I began to meet the other delegates, I began to realize just how amazing of an opportunity I had to be at Washington Week.

Chief Justice Roberts, Deputy Director Gordon, Administrator Kamoie, Senator Ernst, and Vice Chairman Selva were some of my favorite speakers. Their stories, advice, candidness, humor, and overall presence was eye-opening. One thing that stuck with me was a quote used by Secretary Carson, he said, "President Reagan said, 'There's no limit to what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit.'" This quote resonates so deeply with me because of its prevalence in today's government and my life. Throughout Washington Week, bipartisanship was a concept that was so heavily stressed by all branches, parties, and people involved in the program. No matter who the speaker was, what venue we were at, or what time of day it was, bipartisanship was an idea that continuously found its way into conversation. One main topic that I have taken away from Washington Week and found useful upon my return to Streetsboro is this idea of bipartisanship.

Another very prevalent concept I found during the United States Senate Youth Program was acceptance and camaraderie. Meeting my fellow delegates was the highlight of this experience. To be able to converse, debate, explore, enjoy, experience, dance, and bond with some of my delegates is something for which I will forever be grateful. No matter what table I sat at during meals, who was walking next to me as we switched locations, or what table of UNO I joined, I found conversation to be interesting, easy, and intellectual. Meeting with those who were similar to me in political beliefs allowed me to justify my own. Meeting with those who were similar to me in culture allowed me to become confident in myself and my place at this program. Meeting with those who were different than me in several different ways allowed me to become more open-minded and understanding. Meeting our "Military Mentors" completely redefined my world allowing me to become even more appreciative for those who serve our nation. Each encounter I had with a delegate, no matter if they were from California or Kentucky, North Carolina or Arkansas, or Indiana or Florida there was acceptance, understanding, and above all a desire to create an environment emphasized around the aforementioned idea of bipartisanship, which is something I am very thankful to have experienced.

Although I started off anxious and fearful, my nerves subsided as I began to soak in every moment from a week that would soon become the best seven days of my life. I am truly honored to have represented my school, community, state, and nation at the 57th Annual United States Senate Youth Program. I am grateful for the amazing speakers, service, military mentors, and opportunity provided to me by the Hearst Foundations and U.S. Senate. But beyond all, I am thankful for my fellow delegates for opening my eyes, filling my heart, and renewing my soul as I begin to look towards the next four years of my life. One of my favorite quotes is by Nelson Mandela, he said, "It always seems impossible until it's done." Not only am I excited to have been a part of the seemingly impossible piece of history and life-changing experience that was Washington Week, but I am excited to see what the future holds for all involved in this year's program and if one day our paths will converge once again in Washington, D.C.