

Zae Brewer, GA - 2021

Since my acceptance for the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP), I have felt that I have had the tremendous honor of becoming a delegate in the United States Senate Youth Program from the great state of Georgia. While the program this year was like no other since it was virtual, it was still creatively amazing and wonderful. I did activities during Washington Week that I never would've thought I would've done when I got into politics six years ago. Meeting my fellow delegates was also an honor, and I am happy to call many of them friends forever.

As I reflect on the 59th Annual United States Senate Youth Program, I truly realize how blessed, lucky, and honored to have been a delegate from the great state of Georgia. This prestigious program is the first big step to fulfilling my destiny and life in public service. I learned that public service comes in many different forms whether it simply is a Senate historian like Betty Koed, an astronaut like Scott Kelly, a doctor like Anthony Fauci, and even a president like Joe Biden. The speakers during Washington Week were so powerful not only due to the positions they are in, but due to their words of wisdom to delegates during Washington Week. The diversity of our great nation was demonstrated not only by the makeup of delegates from all walks of life, but through the speakers themselves and how different they were from one another.

I will never forget the great moment that I introduced Associate Justice Clarence Thomas, a Georgia native to speak to us. I will fondly remember how he thanked me and indicated that he read my delegate bio and was impressed. I remember him saying something that stood out to me, he said; "Your ideas are individual and collective ideas don't exist, and it is not possible for everyone to be the same.". That stood out to me because he was saying that no matter how identical people can be with their views and philosophy, at heart no one can be or is absolutely the same. Another speaker that really stole the show for me was the famous CBS anchor Norah O'Donnell. The thing she said that stood out to me greatly that was rather short was "Survival is underrated." That one line is now burned into my memory because it was one of those lines that are short and vague, yet powerful and meaningful. Norah O'Donnell' stories proved that she is one of the best American journalists in history. Along with the amazing speakers however, my favorite part of USSYP was meeting and getting to know my fellow delegates.

Meeting and getting to know my co-delegate Faith Townsend and my other fellow delegates was honestly the best part of the program for me personally. A month prior to Washington Week, delegates created a Discord server and a 24/7 Zoom meeting and almost every night we would talk. I got to know so many delegates and I consider some long term, true friends. There aren't a lot of people our age who are truly passionate and deeply invested in public service and our government. Just having the same passion, which is rare for our age caused almost all of us to have an instant bond of friendship and trust. The makeup of all of us as stated earlier also showed the beauty and diversity of America. The makeup of delegates looked like America and I think that is quite important. One thing is for sure, every one of us was super deserving to be a part of this program.

Overall being a delegate in the United States Senate Youth Program was truly something I never thought would happen to me. The story of my experience in this great program is something I will pass on to my children and grandchildren. The friends I made I hope will be by my side as friends, allies, and I hope someday colleagues until death. I truly thank everyone from Rayne Guilford, to Lynn DeSmet, to Caroline Berver to all of our speakers, and to my family for all the support and efforts. I will forever be honored and grateful to be one of the 104.