

Seth Jarvis, KS - 2021

I remember when I first learned about the United States Senate Youth Program. My history teacher showed me a printed email about it. I knew at that moment that this would be a program for me. I've always had an intense passion for both history and politics, so an opportunity like this program was one that I was not going to let pass by.

After that, I completed the application and waited for several incredibly tense months to hear the results. I found out that I won it on the night of the Super Bowl. It was certainly an excellent change of tone after witnessing the gruesome defeat of the Kansas City Chiefs. I was jumping up and down with joy as I was the happiest I had been all year.

It's safe to say that the past year has been quite the roller coaster. This program had to adapt with the rest of humanity in order to deal with the present crisis. It would be the first to take place totally online. Despite this fact, I was no less excited about the opportunities that the program would grant me.

I think one of the most positive aspects of this program was meeting all of the other delegates. I was worried that I would not get the opportunity to really meet any of them, but thankfully those fears did not materialize. My fellow delegates got together and created a Discord chat. There, we started to get to know each other well before the start of Washington Week.

Learning about them was one of my favorite parts of the week. Recent events have made me a little worried about the fate of this nation, but I know that it has an incredibly bright set of people who will one day run it. Night after night there were and still are discussions about politics, science, religion, history, and just about any other topic. I've learned so much from them in just a couple of late-night Zoom calls. I've pondered ideas that I've never even thought to consider before. There has been no higher honor to me than to have stood beside some of the most talented people in my generation.

Washington Week itself may have been online, but I do not believe for a second that this experience was any less valuable. Hearing from Justice Clarence Thomas, Senator Tammy Baldwin, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and so many more leaders exposed me to a wide variety of thoughts and opinions. I am going to remember what they spoke of for the rest of my time on Earth. One piece of advice that really stands out to me is from CBS news anchor Norah O'Donnell. She advised us all to always be the most well-read person in the room and that one should always try to listen and learn from everyone. There is nothing that I love more than learning and developing my ideas, so I feel even more encouraged to go out and challenge myself.

Our Military Mentors were also fantastic over the week. Captain Teri Boivin was always there to encourage us throughout the program. It was always nice to start each morning with my fellow delegates who were also in our mentor group. We had a wealth of discussions in our group, and it was always fantastic to learn about the diverse perspectives of everyone there. It was also a good setting to relax a bit after a long day of hearing from some of the most prominent people in America.

If there is one thing that completely sums up Washington Week for me, it is the fact that it challenged me. My ideals were put to the test. My vision for the future has now shifted. The way I interact with the world is changing. The truth is that this program has in a way caused me to rethink the direction of my life. I never thought that I would ever make it to this point and now that I have, I want to go further. Seeing the accomplishments of my fellow delegates has encouraged me to go for the boldest goals possible. I want to do whatever I can to give back this nation, and to humanity as a whole. Astronaut Scott Kelly stated something that inspired me greatly: when he was preparing to start the journey to become an astronaut, he told himself that he may as well fail at something bold. That is what I am going to do. I am going to shoot for the moon and see what happens. The absolute worst action I could take at this moment is to not try at all. Besides - if I fail, I am still among the stars.