

## **Fardouza Farah, MN - 2021**

Writing this essay has to be the most bitter-sweet thing I have ever done. On the one hand, I am so grateful and happy about everything that I have been able to do with the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP), but on the other, I cannot fathom a closure to this experience. The number of factors that contributed to my experience is truly countless, from the dangerously hilarious late-night zoom calls to the mesmerizing words we heard from speakers during Washington week. Our unorganized delegate-run Zoom calls have to be the most unexplainable phenomena I have ever experienced.

Just an hour after joining the legendary discord chat in late February, I got a friendly tag from Augustus Fadden (one of the Delaware delegates), prompting the Minnesota delegates to join an exciting debate about Ilhan Omar. I decided to join the call with very little preparation as to what I was walking into. I soon realized that nothing could ever prepare me for any future Zoom calls. While acknowledging that I did contribute a fair share of commentary that shaped the nature of our Zoom calls, the topics discussed on our calls had such a wide range of variability that no soap opera could ever truly capture the dramatics that took place. Despite the “out of pocket” tendencies of our discussions, a lot of my “firsts” originated from these zoom calls; including the creation of my first Fardouza Farah fan page, my first interaction with someone who owns a Tesla, and most importantly, my first serious debate about the WOW counties. Soon enough, our calls turned into nervous rants and speculations about the wonders of Washington Week.

Washington Week came around faster than Ms. Rayne Guilford can say, “The zoom where it happens.” Soon I found myself sitting in front of my screen, hearing the words “Dear delegates and distinguished guests” bounce around in my head. With over ten pages of notes and quotes from Washington week, I could not possibly touch on everything that happened during Washington week. I went into Washington Week with an indescribable feeling of nervousness and came out with an indescribable sense of empowerment and blissful despair.