

Kayle Lauck, SD - 2021

The opportunity I had to attend Washington Week ONLINE was lifechanging. Although nothing could have replaced the opportunity to visit Washington, DC in person, the online event was managed so well that the experience was still irreplaceable. Any event or mishap that could have taken place was planned for, and each of the delegates was provided with ample amount of information to make the week run smoothly. The opportunity to participate in this event was made even better by the interactive aspects of the week. Each of the delegates were able to prepare questions and have thoughtful discussions with some of the most well-known and talented individuals in the country.

My most favorite aspect of this week was the opportunity to meet other talented and passionate individuals from across our great nation. I had the chance to learn just as much from the other delegates as I did from the speakers invited to this event. The other delegates were articulate and accomplished individuals who I know will offer many great things to the future of our country. The delegates talents and passions were only strengthened through the opportunity we all had to meet the people we met during Washington Week. Our horizons were only broadened through the activities we took part in.

Being from the rural state of South Dakota, I have developed passions and interests that center around our state's number one industry: agriculture. This topic is something that I have worked hard on through my years in high school to understand and advocate for. In this way, I think that I offered a perspective to the other delegates that many may not have thought of. In the same way, for the entire week, I got to interact with individuals whose states differ greatly from mine in their industries, politics, and opinions. These interactions were startling at first, especially between myself and individuals with completely different opinions than myself. However, the reason these interactions were the favorite part of my week was because even as I was conversing with and listening to individuals with such different opinions than myself, I could see the passion each of the delegates had for their interests. It helped me to understand that in our country it is not quite as important what one's opinion is, but rather that the individual cares so deeply about a topic that they are willing to advocate for it. Knowing that the future of our country lies in the hand of such intellectual and passionate individuals helps me to have faith for the future of our country.

One of the most important lessons I will take away from my time in Washington Week is that even some of the most successful people in our country did not have a direct plan in place for their life. Their own talents and passions led them to positions of power in our country, not necessarily their foresight or planning. This gives me hope for my own path as I try to navigate the correct decision for where I will study in college. I can trust in the fact that my own abilities will lead me in the right direction in the future and that my hard work will be valued. My experience being a part of the online Washington Week has changed my perspective of the world. I can see myself in the shoes of some of the individuals who talked with us because I see my own passion for our country and government reflected in them as well. I will carry the lessons and insights I gained from my Washington Week with me for the rest of my life. I hope I can hold true to the values of service and passion in my lifetime and pass those traits to my children some day as well.