

Ross Bodine, IL – 2022

When applying for this program, I didn't think I even had a chance at being selected as a delegate. The application described how only two people from each state would be selected to participate. When I learned that I had been chosen as one of the delegates for Illinois I was thrilled. I thought that it was going to be a great opportunity to meet incredible people within government.

But to my surprise, this program was so much more than that. Not only did I have the opportunity to meet government officials and leaders, but I also had the chance to virtually tour government buildings and experience the U.S. Army Jazz Ambassadors. Most importantly, it gave me the chance to connect with people all over the country that I probably would have not met had I not been selected to participate.

My favorite part of Washington Week was getting to hear from Senator Susan Collins of Maine. She answered many questions and spoke about many different issues. However, the most interesting thing she spoke about was bipartisanship. She explained that there are "fanatical" Democrats and "fanatical" Republicans, but not enough "fanatical" moderates. This stuck out to me. In the extremely decisive political climate we live in today, it was comforting to hear that someone is fighting to bridge the divide and bring the parties back together. This is the kind of leadership that is needed to move our country forward.

Although this program was not held in-person, it still offered so many great experiences. From hearing Secretary of Transportation Buttigieg speak to the delegate hangout rooms, the program was a great experience that will leave lasting memories that will stay with me forever. I am grateful to have taken part in this program and I am honored to be part of a group of 6,000 other alumni that I hope to meet in-person in the future.