

## Fallon Eggett, ME – 2022

Being able to participate in the Senate Youth Program was a dream come true. Throughout my time in high school, I always hoped I would be able to participate in this remarkable experience but I knew how challenging and competitive the application process is. When I found out I was selected as a delegate, I was so excited and from that point on, I was thinking about Washington Week almost every day. Washington Week exceeded my expectations, I learned so much, met so many great people, and made incredible memories.

“To form a more perfect union” - this phrase appears in my Senate Youth Program notebook numerous times. It was a theme of the week and was discussed by nearly all speakers. Throughout the week, I learned how each speaker was working towards a more perfect union in their respective positions. I found all of the guests incredibly interesting and loved having the opportunity to hear their perspectives on the current situation of American politics and foreign policy. NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Carmen Romero spoke about the situation in Ukraine and explained the reasons why NATO will not impose a no-fly zone. It was incredible to hear from someone in such an important position during a time like this. We also heard from the Senate Historian Dr. Betty Koed. As someone who finds Senate history and parliamentary procedure fascinating, I greatly enjoyed hearing her discuss the origins of the debate over the filibuster and the nuclear option. Speakers like Secretary Buttigieg and Senator Gardner inspired us by being examples of what Senate Youth Program Alumni can achieve. Others, including Justice Kennedy, challenged us, asking questions for delegates to answer. Every speaker was very generous with their time and I admired their willingness to answer all questions, even the difficult ones.

One interactive activity stood out as a highlight of the program, the Suez Canal Crisis Simulation. I loved this activity -- it was fun and informative. I enjoyed drafting a deal with my fellow delegates and found it was a great way to see how diplomacy is conducted. I believe I learned useful teamwork skills from this exercise.

Another aspect of the program which contributed greatly to the experience were the military mentor groups. In this group, I was able to discuss the program with other delegates and hear their opinions. These meetings have been one of the aspects I have missed most since the conclusion of the program. I feel like I have built lifelong friendships with the people in my military mentor group. I learned so much from the members of my group. We talked about everything from the program events to the differences in COVID policies at our schools. My mentor group often went past the suggested end time for meetings because we were having so much fun!

Meeting with Senators Collins and King was a wonderful experience! They were so kind and clearly cared greatly about this program. Hearing about their years of public service was enlightening and inspiring.

The Senate Youth Program was a wonderful experience that I will cherish for the rest of my life. I learned so much in four days and I met so many interesting people. It was great to spend a few days with a group of people with similar interests and passions. It was truly a life changing experience and I will forever be grateful to the Hearst Foundations and USSYP staff for putting together this wonderful program!