

Norah Wills, IL – 2023

“When you do something greater than yourself, you get more out of it.” – Justice Sotomayor, March 6, 2023.

The United States Youth Senate Program (USSYP) was truly one of the best times of my life. It was a dream I will remember for years to come, constantly reminiscing and reminding myself of the one-week wonder I experienced.

Participating in the program was a life-changing experience. Upon arriving in Washington, D.C., I knew I was part of something truly special. Meeting and engaging with other talented and motivated high school students from across the country was something I will not forget. I found lifelong friends in my fellow delegates. Each one was as inspiring as the next, and I formed real connections with my peers in a way I had not often before.

For me, one of the most memorable aspects of the program was the opportunity to hear from prominent leaders such as Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Secretary Miguel Cardona, and Senator John Hickenlooper. Their insights and perspectives on issues ranging from law and policy to education and leadership were remarkable. I loved Senator Hickenlooper’s comedic anecdotes layered with sobering, sage advice. I appreciated Secretary Cardona’s earnest words, telling us, “to be good with people, you have to be good with yourself.” Justice Sotomayor was unforgettable. I still have in my mind how close she stood to me, and how she genuinely connected with each and every one of us.

Overall, the United States Youth Senate Program helped me to develop my leadership skills and expand my understanding of the world and our government. The connections I made with other delegates will not be easily erased. The experience has inspired me to pursue a career in public service. Each day that passes since Washington Week is one that I get to reflect on the incredible lessons I learned, the food I ate, and the lifelong friends I made. I believe I speak for all delegates when I say USSYP 2023 was a unique experience, truly unlike anything else.