

Margaret Moe, LA – 2023

There is truly nothing else like the United States Senate Youth Program that aims to foster civic and community engagement at the highest levels. The experiences that I and my fellow 103 delegates had this March are events that I may never experience again in my lifetime, and I'm all the more grateful that we had them together. My fellow delegates made the experience that much more memorable, and I cannot imagine it without them. Over the week, I became acquainted with individuals who were not only kind and compassionate toward one another and their communities, but who see a path forward to making our country a better place for everyone. In a deeply divided country that often seems almost unfixable, Washington Week brought together some of the greatest future changemakers who could bring this country back together. The "Olympics of public service" made it very clear that while we certainly have work to do, we may not be as bad off as I thought. People with different ideologies, backgrounds, cultures, and passions talked together, lived together, and learned together while creating meaningful connections that will last a lifetime. As United States Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

As I entered the United States Senate Youth Program, I was disillusioned with our government and what I had seen in my own state. After this week, I've changed my mind. I witnessed countless individuals who wake up every day to fight and protect those around them. There are people who believe that we can and should do better and are going to put in the work to make those changes. As we heard from speaker after speaker, we should help because we can, not because we're motivated by outside sources, but out of a duty to ourselves and to our country. In the words of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley, "You don't have to serve in the military as long as you serve our country in other ways." I believe that the United States Senate Youth Program is an unparalleled crash course in public service that has managed to give me many valuable lessons, but above all – hope. Hope that one day, my generation can begin to heal our nation and begin incredible legacies of our own and a hope that we can work together to accomplish great things.