

## **Sarah Park, NV – 2023**

Throughout high school, oftentimes as one of the only young people involved in my extracurricular activities, I fervently believed in the quote, “If there’s a will, there’s a way” – and hearing from esteemed officials such as US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy solidified the validity of that quote.

Hearing Justice Sotomayor emphasizing to simply ask questions whenever you are uncertain or Surgeon General Murthy highlighting an adequate work-life balance humanized the elected officials I looked up to – and reminded me and the other delegates that we all start somewhere. If there’s a will, there’s a way. As a young person, hearing the inspirational life stories and important life lessons directly from the figures I look up to further enshrined my motivation to work to see the change I hope to see in American society.

During Washington Week, my class and I also heard from General Mark Milley, the Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, journalist Soledad O’Brien, United States Senators Hickenlooper and Capito, and more.

Besides the invigorating guest speakers, the memories I’ll take with me to college and beyond are those with the other delegates – 103 of the brightest high-schoolers hailing from all over the United States and DoDEA. My class was energetic with a resolve to make change – which only made me more hopeful to see the changemakers of my generation lead the future of America. From connecting with my amazing Military Mentor Lieutenant Hickey, my Military Mentor group, and the other delegates – which led to close friendships I truly cherish – Washington Week was an invaluable experience I’ll always remember fondly.

The wonderful programming and series of events The Hearst Foundations had planned for the delegates also enriched my Washington Week experience. Every day was a new adventure that enhanced my learning and passion for government. One of the most remarkable events planned was the Senate Reception in the United States Capitol. My co-delegate and I had the privilege of meeting both our U.S. Senators – Senator Jacky Rosen and Senator Catherine Cortez Masto – and conversing with them. We were also able to visit the Institute of Peace, the Pentagon, and many more distinguished institutions and agencies.

And so, I can say with confidence that the 61<sup>st</sup> United States Senate Youth Program Washington Week was inspiring, humbling, and energizing – energizing me to continue channeling the “will” to pursue the “way.”