

Savannah Harlan, UT – 2023

“I know one thing for sure. I know one day I’ll die, and I know someone like you will replace me.” Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor said as we all stared at her in awe. As I sat on a hard, wooden bench in the Supreme Court, I felt the weight of her words and the room I was in. These were the walls that had seen cases like *Brown vs. Board of Education*, *Roe vs. Wade*, and *Obergefell vs. Hodges*. The history was in the air, and you could feel it all around you.

When I think back to my time in Washington, the theme of history comes to mind. History is all around us, and we can use our knowledge of the past to become the leaders of tomorrow. Our journey as delegates started at Mount Vernon, just like the country we call home. We made our way through monuments, office buildings, memorials, and even a certain famous residence on Pennsylvania Avenue. We learned what each fork and spoon meant at our fancy meals, and took in the sights and smells of D.C as we walked down the streets sweating in our professional attire. But most of all, we learned about each other. My co-delegates and Military Mentors were some of the kindest, most intelligent, and humble people I had ever met. Whether we were talking politics or Taylor Swift, we always knew how to make each other's day brighter. I'll cherish my connections with them forever and will be able to brag for the rest of my life that I have at least two friends in all fifty states.

My biggest takeaway from Washington Week was that there is hope for political collaboration in the future. While not all of the delegates had the same beliefs and opinions, we all believed in making our country a better place. In a time where it feels like bipartisanship is dead, I found the 104 delegates of this year's Washington Week to be a beacon of light in the darkness.