

Isaac Ormand, AZ – 2024

One word: Unforgettable. From the solemn respect at Arlington National Cemetery to the once-in-a-lifetime experience of meeting the 46th president of the United States face to face, it's safe to say that the short but overflowing United States Senate Youth Program's Washington Week will never be forgotten. Most delegates will call the United States Senate Youth Program a trajectory-changing event. While this may seem cliché on the front end, once the week was all said and done, the saying rang true. As a delegate from Arizona, I wasn't sure what to expect, so let's start from the beginning.

In the Fall of 2023, my options were wide open and I had no clear path forward. I knew that I wanted to have a background in cybersecurity/defense and enter one or multiple of three industries: Politics, law, and business/entrepreneurship. Naturally, I started searching for opportunities. One caught my attention immediately; the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP). It wasn't like any scholarship I had seen before. Most scholarships just give a lump sum and congratulate you for the achievement. However, the USSYP was different in that it was directly involved with the United States Senate, and came with an opportunity not just to visit Washington, DC for a week, but rather to experience and develop a more concrete knowledge of our nation's inner workings.

The week officially started with a buffet-style dinner attended by alumni of the program sitting at tables respective to the industry they currently work in, ranging from nurses to intelligence community members. I rotated between the Information Technology, Business, Law, and Government tables speaking with alumni from as recent as last year and as long ago as 1989. One sentiment was recurring throughout all of the conversations I had that night, the United States Senate Youth Program changed their life.

The speaker that impacted me the most during the week was Brian Kamoie, a USSYP alumnus, former National Security Council advisor, and current managing director at Deloitte. He was the speaker that showed me that what I wanted to do was realistic. He started in law, then proceeded to move back and forth between public and private industry eventually drifting towards cybersecurity, which happens to be close to exactly what I intend to pursue. Whenever he was told he was needed, he found a way to make it work, a virtue I admire. I saw so much of myself in Mr. Kamoie and intend to keep in touch with him over LinkedIn.

Other speakers we heard from included the Senate Advisory Committee Co-Chairs, Senators Catherine Cortez Masto and John Barrasso, the Senate Parliamentarian Elizabeth MacDonough, Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, Assistant Secretary of State Bill Russo, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Senator Bill Cassidy, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Charles Q. Brown, Jr., and the highlight of the week, the president and first lady of the United States, Joe and Jill Biden. All of which were amazing and shaped the week as a whole.

The experiences and the inspiring, driven individuals I met and spoke with have all aided in solidifying my next steps in my life. I learned that my passion for public service and policy went deeper than I had originally thought. As the 21st century continues, greater portions of our lives are affected by technology. This week showed me that my goal must be to influence the intersection of government, law, and technology for the better. Not only did I learn what my goal should be, but the United States Senate Youth Program opened many doors to allow me to pursue that end. The principle from my Military Mentor Captain Daniel McGurkin will stick with me as I continue through the early stages of my life, remembering that I'm here to serve others, that "It's not about me."