

Angela Hummingbird, NM – 2024

As a delegate with the immense privilege of representing the glorious state of New Mexico in this year's United States Senate Youth Program cohort, my journey was nothing short of extraordinary, filled with lessons from speakers, fellow delegates, and Military Mentors that illuminated the intricacies of American governance. Serving as a delegate provided me with unparalleled opportunities to engage with prominent figures, witness historical events firsthand, and forge connections with fellow delegates from across the nation.

One of the defining moments of my experience was watching the State of the Union address, remarkably the first opportunity of its sort for USSYP delegates in the decades of the program's rich history. Sitting among my fellow delegates in the White House, I felt the weight of responsibility and massive privilege, knowing that I was part of a select group witnessing the democratic process in action. The address served as a powerful reminder of the importance of civic engagement and the impact of policy decisions on the lives of millions of Americans.

Having the opportunity to briefly meet with President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden was a highlight of my time as a USSYP delegate. Their warmth and genuine interest in the concerns of young people left a lasting impression on me. Their brief interactions with our group reinforced my belief in the power of leadership to inspire positive change and reaffirmed my commitment to public service.

As a delegate, I had the immense privilege of introducing Senate Historian Dr. Katherine Scott. It was an honor to shine a spotlight on her expertise, her connections to New Mexico, and her immeasurably valuable contributions to preserving the rich tapestry of American history. Her insights on suffrage and worker's rights movements, identifying the contributions of the racially and gender-wise marginalized, underscored the importance of understanding the past to inform the present and shape the future.

Visiting the Department of State and hearing from Secretary Antony Blinken provided valuable insights into the complexities of international relations, particularly as a delegate with an interest in cultural politics and a passion for reconciling international difference. Hearing directly from one of the nation's top diplomats shed light on the challenges and opportunities facing the United States on the global stage. It reinforced the importance of diplomacy in advancing national interests and promoting peace and stability worldwide. In this respect, perhaps the most enriching aspect of my experience was the opportunity to connect with 103 other delegates from diverse backgrounds who hold vastly different ideological perspectives. Interacting with passionate young leaders from every corner of the country broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of the issues facing our nation. Through spirited discussions and collaborative activities, we exchanged ideas, forged friendships, and laid the groundwork for future endeavors within the realm of policy aimed at addressing the challenges of our time.

My experience as a United States Senate Youth Program delegate, representing the state of New Mexico, was truly transformative. From witnessing newfound USSYP history to engaging with prominent leaders and fellow delegates, I gained invaluable insights that will shape my future endeavors in public service. I am grateful to have held an opportunity of such prestige and great value, and look forward to applying the lessons learned to make a positive impact in my community and beyond.