

Robert Barsel, NV – 2024

DC Trip Reflection

Ok, so at a base level, I have to just say that D.C. was one of the best weeks of my life. I could go through everyone I met and what I did but I think that wouldn't be the best use of time. Instead, I'm just going to touch on how I feel like my outlook has changed since going.

For starters, while it may seem insignificant the sheer volume of accents I heard was amazing. I'd say that Vegas is a relatively diverse place, but what it does lack is geographic diversity with many people coming from the West Coast and California. Meeting people who were fourth generation farmers was a unique way to learn about just how different someone's lens can be.

For example, during a talk with Pete Buttigieg a representative from Kansas asked about local road policies that would affect agriculture in his area. For more context the road needed to be expanded to allow for greater tractor space and most of the funding was federal block grants. Being in Vegas my whole life I would have never thought about road size, and this example was a microcosm of the entire trip.

Another example is an Alaska friend who had the experience decapitating a whale that had been beached with his biology class. Outside of strictly the other delegates being able to have open political discussion with actual senators instead of someone so many degrees removed was genuinely inspiring and almost made me consider public policy...almost.

Ok, beyond the serious stuff I also have to say that the food was incredible. We were served three course meals for every lunch and dinner and so much coffee that waking up this morning was nigh on impossible. I would whole-heartedly recommend the scholarship to anyone interested as one of the most invaluable experiences of my life and I can't wait to talk more about it! Also, I got to meet Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Cory Booker, eat dinner with Catherine Cortez Masto, and so many more so that was pretty cool. Especially the dinner because being able to talk to a Vegas local especially about October 1st from a policy perspective on the BUMP Act was once in a lifetime meal. To the Hearst Foundations and everyone else who made that week possible, I can't say thank you enough as it has truly changed my life.