

Wright Chen, OH – 2024

I want to highlight my most impactful memory from Washington Week: getting into my small group of 7, including my Military Mentor, on the last night. We shared what goals we had reached or fallen short of for the week, what we wish to take away, and how we want to go on living our lives. It was a very emotional and vulnerable moment, and it will stick with me for a very long time. That's what made this memory more impactful than shaking hands and rubbing shoulders with famous government figures. The discussion was led by our Military Mentor, Marine Corps Captain Daniel McGurkin. He was only 30 years old, but his experiences and wisdom make him one of the most influential role models I will ever have. After hearing Captain McGurkin impart to us some wisdom, I wish to, going forward, actually value living life and focus on strengthening my relationships more.

Some memorable moments include him talking to us about the difference between résumé builders and eulogy builders. He highlighted that the most important things we should accomplish in our lives are not what goes on our résumé, but instead are what will be written about us in our eulogies. Our compassion, generosity, and patience will always be more important than any job, income, or career padding that we earn. He highlighted that our life is happening right now, that it doesn't slow down, so we need to be prepared for the fragility of time. He highlighted the importance of having a "switch" that can be turned on in times that discipline is needed, and how much further in life this "switch" would get us.

However, while the intimate group discussion with my military mentor group was the most impactful, I wanted to talk about Washington Week's coolest experience, which has to be being invited to the East Wing of the White House for a State of the Union watch party. We had snacks, refreshments, two televisions set up, and a couple of celebrity run-ins (another watch party for celebrities was being hosted in an adjacent room). The M&M packs and bathroom paper towels had the Presidential seal on them! While we were waiting for President Biden and the First Lady to come say hello and take a photo with us, we were greeted by White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. After President Biden arrived, he ended up staying for 40 minutes (until 1 in the morning!) talking to us about his experiences and giving advice on how to get involved in politics. It was by far the coolest party I have ever been to.

Washington Week was truly transformative, and it shaped who I am and will always aim to be. For that, I am endlessly grateful for being given the amazing opportunity to represent Ohio as a Senate Youth delegate. To close, I wish to share some impactful quotes from Washington Week that will stick with me for the rest of my life:

"A good leader learns from their experiences. A great leader learns from others' experiences." – Secretary Pete Buttigieg

"What will you do with your one wild and precious life?" – Deloitte Managing Director Brian Kamoie

"It's not about me." - Captain Daniel McGurkin