

Katie Schulte, SD – 2024

Putting the United States Senate Youth Program into words is not an easy task. The sites we saw and the leaders we heard from were fantastic, but what I value most is the relationships I built with my fellow delegates. Despite our varied backgrounds and lifestyles, I have never felt such a strong sense of camaraderie with a group of individuals. As the time for the experience was approaching, I was nervous to attend Washington Week. However, when I left, I had tears in my eyes because it was difficult to leave.

One of the standout speakers for me was Brian Kamoie. I was impressed by his candid communication style and his use of humor throughout his presentation. What resonated with me most was his relatability. When he expressed feeling like an outsider, I could completely empathize. His quote, "What are you planning to do with your one wild and precious life?" really stuck with me. It served as a reminder not to take my time for granted and to appreciate the little things. Another speaker that stood out to me was General Charles Q. Brown Jr. His inspiring message: "It doesn't matter if the glass is half full or half empty, it's how you fill the glass," really left an impression.

Another aspect I appreciated from this experience was that I saw the politicians as everyday people. So often we put our leaders on a pedestal and view them as separate from everyday life, but meeting my senators in person and having genuine conversations with them showed me that they are just like us. They were warm, friendly, and genuinely interested in our stories. Additionally, Friday night was the best night of the week with the coach spirit competition. It was an absolutely enjoyable experience that I'll never forget. I loved using my dancing abilities to bring my coach together for the win, and performing and singing with all the delegates.

I am incredibly grateful for the unforgettable experience that Washington Week has provided me. I extend my sincerest thanks to my fellow delegates, distinguished guests, and outstanding military mentors who made this event possible. Washington Week was truly inspiring, fueling the passion for leadership within those who aspire to create a better future.

