

Marisa D'Amico, WI – 2024

It is my firm belief that each of us holds a responsibility to remember the words of wisdom of those who shape us into who we are, both daily, and in times when the light of democracy may seem to flicker. The United States Senate Youth Program not only solidified those predisposed beliefs, but taught me so much more. Each day provided an opportunity to learn and grow with one another, and I will forever be grateful for the bonds I made with my 103 bright, impassioned, and remarkable co-delegates.

On the first night of the program, Bill Doherty, the co-founder of Braver Angels, brought the importance of meaningful and respectful dialogue through disagreement to the forefront. This same message rang true throughout the week, with statements reflected by many of our speakers, emphasizing there must be collaboration to bridge the ever-growing divide within our nation. Through collaboration with each other, no matter the differences in opinions or ideologies, we can become changemakers much faster than on our own. Through dialogue with my co-delegates, specifically on Coach Bus 1, we were able to come together through music. The song Country Roads, Take Me Home will always remind me of the time spent with my new found family, and I will always remember the moments shared singing our way to the White House, Mount Vernon, The Pentagon, and every place in between.

Washington, D.C. is not only the capital of the United States, but the capital where change occurs. Change within domestic and international offices. Change of perspectives. Change of lives, for better and for worse. The United States Senate Youth Program taught me exactly that. It is often said the government is stationary and unchanging, however I believe the United States Senate Youth Program has taught me the opposite – our government is truly a living, and ever-changing entity. It is impressionable, and will grow to reflect the actions, conversations, votes, and dreams we feed it.

In concurrence with the words shared by Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, “D.C. is the city of what it is; the most visible thing is what is most visible, and the loudest thing is what you hear.” Our voices are the next to be heard, and it is my hope that each of us, though differing in ideologies and beliefs, will be able to be the next loudest thing in Washington D.C. I have this confidence thanks to the remarkable program that is the United States Senate Youth Program, and I will forever be changed and grateful for this pivotal moment in my life.

Thank you, United States Senate Youth Program.