

Words can not adequately describe the unparalleled opportunity provided by The William Randolph Hearst Foundation through the United States Senate Youth Program. Representing the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was humbling. By fully funding and supporting this indescribable experience, the Hearst Foundation broadened the horizons on the impact I can make on others. Washington Week 2009 not only directly launched me to view and be a part of democracy and America at its finest, but it equipped me with the critical tools to become a more educated servant leader.

Leaders who lead are truly servers who serve. This timeless principle was echoed by each individual who made time to address me personally. A passionate sense of pride developed as I witnessed firsthand how America works. Taking part in all aspects of my government will always be a cherished moment in my life. It is easily understood why peoples and nations worldwide envy the American system. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg said that all courts and judges covet the Supreme Court. Why? When a decision is made, it is accepted, and the nation proceeds forward. The court, along with the other branches of government, has a special tradition of reason and a sacred trust to serve the Constitution of the United States. Wow!

Another common theme expressed, most notably by the Assistant Chairman to the Joint Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Selva, was that the best leaders surround themselves with smarter people and learn that the most effective leaders credit the team for successes and accept responsibilities for problems. Desiring to someday be a part of the intelligence community, I greatly enjoyed this wise man's presentation and the Q&A session. Michael Leiter, Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, was also one of my favorite speakers; I loved his point that it is offensive for workers in his field to hear that it is lucky America has not been attacked. He emphasized that there are countless men and women who serve 24/7 to ensure that Americans and others are safe around the globe. I specifically remember Lieutenant General Selva asking our highly esteemed military mentors what they learned throughout the week. A simple and poignant response was, "I learned America is in good hands." This describes the quality of individuals I encountered.

Meeting the President of the United States, countless Senators, government officials, Hearst Foundation staff and touring national monuments and museums were major highlights of my week. The Foundation opened doors for me to rub elbows with the elite of Washington and to glean from their years of experience and expertise. However, gathering 104 strangers from each state and from other parts of the world to recognize common purposes was significant beyond measure. Each delegate had a love of country, an appreciation for those who came before them, and a servant's heart. I simply was blessed to spend a week with the most remarkable young men and women in the world who I am now honored to count as friends. No description of Washington Week can aptly do justice short of living the experience. I would like to send a heartfelt thanks to the Hearst Foundation, Senate Co-Chairs, members of the United States Senate, magnificent speakers, delegates, and all others who made the priceless week possible. I want to especially thank the diligent, dedicated military mentors who provided wisdom and guidance to me; they also deserve the utmost respect for their selfless service to America. The United States Senate Youth Program propelled me into an atmosphere that lit a flame that only time will determine the results. Corporately, we learned that there will never be a convenient time to serve; we must go out, take a stand, and solve problems we are facing today. Thanks to Washington Week, the 2009 delegates are ready to accept this challenge.

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