

The 2009 United States Senate Youth Program

If I were to divide my life into chapters, and divide those chapters into sections, this section would be one of the most extensive sections. Extensive not merely because of the numerous activities of the week itself, but due to the ways that Washington Week has impacted my life. From meeting the 103 other delegates from all across the country, each with their individual points of view, to the military mentors each willing to share their stories and insights, to the inspiring speakers we heard from, Washington Week will forever stay with me as a turning point in my life.

During Washington Week, Lieutenant General Selva was the speaker who stood out most to me. Expecting high ranking members of the military to be more reserved and strict, I was surprised by his down to earth demeanor. Even when it came to those tough questions, he answered them and in the same fervor that he would answer a favorable question. He genuinely wanted to share his insight with us, to pass his experiences on to the youth of tomorrow. It wasn't about him, it was about us.

Senator Thomas Carper was another memorable speaker. He was very personable; before he spoke, he walked to almost every table and introduced himself, and spoke for a little while with each table. What I liked most about my favorite speakers, including Senator Carper was the limited amount of lecture. Each one would briefly touch on topics about succeeding in life, and leave the rest of the time open to questions, which I very much appreciated. Speaking on being physically fit and focusing on excellence, Senator Carper empowered me to start running again every week.

Most of the time, I give people the benefit of the doubt. In some ways, that is a good trait, though listening to Brian Lamb speak provided a second point of view on that trait of mine. These thoughts lead me to conclusions that perhaps there are times best suited for use of either state. His thoughts on challenging ideas, being a skeptic, and questioning everything gave me food for thought, as I challenge myself to continually ask questions and challenge ideas in my everyday life.

However, the moment that ultimately defined Washington Week was the visit to the White House and listening to President Obama speak in person. I had followed Obama on the campaign trail quite closely, listening to his speeches, and reading about his ideas in his books, but all of these did not prepare me to meet the man himself. Meeting the President was a very humbling and inspiring experience, providing the fuel for me to continue my pursuits and continue my work in the public domain. Because of this experience, and the many others we participated in over the week, Washington Week will forever stay in my memory as the ideas I learned continue to influence my life every day.

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