

Washington Week

The 2009 United States Senate Youth Program's Washington Week was an absolutely amazing experience. Never before have I met so many great high school students, seen so many breathtaking sites, and heard more intriguing speakers. The opportunities we were given were phenomenal, and to tell you the truth, I'm having trouble describing exactly how Washington Week made me feel. It was something I will never forget, and I know that each and every delegate who attended feels the same way.

One amazing part of Washington Week was the many speakers that came to talk to us. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who when asked, knew exactly what kind of ice cream she would be; Brian Lamb, the older gentleman from C-SPAN (the CEO in fact) with the heart and spunk of a sixteen year-old; Lisa Murkowski who came to talk to us *despite* her confinement to a wheelchair; General Silva, who not only filled us with information but with a laugh or two as well; And oh yeah! Did I mention we got to meet Barack Obama! The *President of The United States of America*??? Talk about a privileged group of high school students, and not only because we got to hear all of the people mentioned above, but also countless others who all had their own personalities and ways of speaking. I learned more from them than I ever could from a text book.

The speakers were clearly outstanding, and so were the sights, but in all honesty, the most amazing part about Washington Week was the delegates. Those in attendance were some of the most politically minded high school kids in the United States, and before I left for Washington, I was anticipating some heated political debates to form. And sure enough, they did. However, the delegates were some of the most respectful and tolerant kids I have ever known. Sure, there was a scuffle or two, but we were able to debate about everything from healthcare to who had the best view from their hotel room in the most civil manner I have ever seen, and my hat goes off to my fellow delegates. They were also some of the funniest, most easygoing kids I know. Oh,

and I can't forget. A couple of them had some of craziest dance moves this side of the White House!

The military mentors were also a wonderful part of Washington Week, and I can't tell you how influential they were in making the week the outstanding experience that it was. Sitting with them and talking about what they did, where they had been, and how they felt about certain things allowed me to hear a whole new perspective on issues that affect our country on a daily basis. I also have a profound respect for what they do, and I wish them all the best. I want to thank them all for what they taught us.

The 2009 USSYP Washington Week was unbelievable. It all seems like it happened in a flash, and I'm sure that the other delegates know what I mean when I say it feels like it was a dream. It's hard to believe more than a month has gone by and I miss each and every person that I met in Washington. I would also like to thank the William Randolph Hearst Foundation and their staff for the wonderful opportunity and personal attention they gave us. I know I speak for all of us when I say we truly appreciate it. Oh, and fellow delegates? I wish you all the best. You guys were one classy, good lookin' group of kids.

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