

Vitas Zukowski - AZ

Having never been in Washington D.C. before attending the United States Senate Youth Program's Washington Week, I had no idea to expect in our nation's capital. Would Washington D.C. be as grand and historic as others had seemed to witness? Would my fellow delegates come from states where competition for the scholarship was cutthroat; or from states where those students who simply took the initiative to apply were selected? Now having experienced the wonder of Washington Week firsthand I can truly say that my expectations were blown away.

Being in the political capital of the world, constantly surrounded by reminders of our living history, being with with the helmsmen (and women) of our democracy-all potent inspirations, motivating us towards a life of public service. Meeting with people like President Barack Obama, Justice Sonia Sotomajor, and the plethora of other important figures, is truly the most powerful thing youth can experience to be motivated to enter public service. Simply being surrounded by the magnificent symbols of our living history is enough to conjure a sense of awe in our minds.

In today's America many stereotypically look upon our public servants as "paper pushers" and "corrupt politicians." While a noticeable portion of public officials may live up to their stereotype, they are not the ones crafting and implementing the modern accomplishments of government. Without programs like USSYP that help to bring the talented youth of America into the fold of public service, our government would succumb to its stereotype.

I am extremely humbled to have had the chance to participate in this program, and I strongly feel that this experience was once-in-a-lifetime. USSYP has reinforced my wish of becoming a public servant, putting my abilities to work for the American people.