

Jonathan Davis – HI

Washington Week 2010 was a whirlwind of invaluable experiences that exposed me to the institutions and people that shape American government and politics. I live in Waianae, Hawai'i, and oftentimes the events that take place in Washington seem too distant and abstract to really matter to the people here. The United States Senate Youth Program changed my mind. Before arriving in D.C., I expected Washington Week to be a series of tours and lectures, without any real contact with the policymakers. I did not expect to be able to interact with the people that make history on a personal level, to learn so much on a firsthand basis, and to make so many friends with such ambition and drive.

When I first saw the Washington Week itinerary I was astounded to see names that I had only heard of in the news. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, Senator Richard Lugar, and President Obama were among those who you would expect to see in today's edition of the New York Times. Ambassador from India Meera Shankar's speech really stood out to me. The fact that she is an influential woman from a developing power really made an impression. She was extremely straightforward and her insight into India's plan for the future was extraordinary. The USSYP staff did an excellent job of providing stimulating and informative speakers, and I was certainly in awe after every presentation.

Overall, the friends I made during Washington Week were the highlight of my experience. I had the opportunity to meet 103 other people from around the county who share my interests. The discussions that we had were honestly some of the most intellectually stimulating I have ever had. Each delegate brought something unique to the table, and I definitely enjoyed getting to know all of them.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Hearst Foundation and all of the hardworking USSYP staff that made Washington Week great. I owe this opportunity of a lifetime to them.