

## Washington Week Essay-Austin Major -KY

When I first learned of my acceptance to USSYP, I must admit, I was elated. However, this elation was not because I was about to experience one of the most inspiring weeks of my life, but rather because I was going to miss an entire week of school. However, now, as I reflect on my experience in Washington, I feel as though my elation should have been for all of the opportunities I would have as a member of the USSYP delegation. Throughout the week, we were given the privilege to talk to and more importantly with some of the most important officials in the nation. Of all of these individuals, my favorite was Associate Justice Sotomayor. While many of the other speakers maintained a degree of political correctness in their speeches and answers, she appeared to be the most genuine in all of her answers. Not only did her life story truly amaze me, but she was humble about her rise to such a prominent role. Sotomayor stands out in my mind not particularly because of what she said, but rather how she said it. Her speech provided reassurance that our government officials are intelligent people, willing to listen to others, but assertive in their own right.

While I learned a great deal from each and every one of the speakers, all of whom brought unique and interesting perspectives on a vast array of issues, I feel as though the majority of the learning throughout this wonderful week occurred during my daily interactions with fellow delegates, Military Mentors, and USSYP staff. My various discussions with these individuals, which spanned from politics to plans in the future to the latest YouTube craze and every thing in between, provided me with a sense of humility, as well as a renewed faith in the future of our country. To me, USSYP served not only as a valuable (which, in my opinion, is not nearly a strong enough word to describe the emphasis I place upon the value of my USSYP experience) educational opportunity, but a sense of reassurance that the government is and will be run by this nation's best and brightest. I can not say enough about this program and the Hearst Foundations for its generosity. I will truly cherish my memories at USSYP throughout my life and I would like to thank you for making my experience so wonderful.