

Nicholson, Jacob - MO

USSYP Experience

My United States Senate Youth Experience can only be described as an amazing combination of atmosphere, conversation, education, and fun. I cannot thank the Hearst Foundation enough for putting that combination together and giving me the opportunity to experience it. If I have to pick favorites out of that combination, however, I suppose I can. Among speakers, I valued Indian Ambassador Shankar and Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor the most. Ambassador Shankar offered a broad-minded, hopeful but practical worldview that I can only hope to possess as an adult, and Justice Sotomayor represents all the good that can come out of our uniquely American system, provided a liberal amount of hard work is put into it. Both speakers gave profound advice and experience to all of us delegates, and I appreciate them wholeheartedly for it.

My favorite monument in Washington D.C. will always be the Korean War Memorial, and I thoroughly enjoyed getting to see that again as an event in the USSYP. My grandfather fought in the Korean War, and the expressions on the faces of the statues in the Memorial make his experience real to me. Out of all the events, however, my favorite was the time we spent in the Arlington National Cemetery. We toured Arlington on the last day before our departure, and it turned out to be the only day on which it rained. That fact alone moved me. I found it fitting that we could celebrate the vibrancy of our nation's government and people for an entire week and then take time at the end of that week to feel the rain in such a solemn atmosphere. It was a time to understand and appreciate the lives given by Americans to make such vibrancy possible.

Overall, my USSYP experience was the best week of my life, no contest. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with the best delegates that America's youth has to offer, among America's most moving monuments, with America's most highly recognized public officials, in the most powerful city in the world. The Hearst Foundation will have my undying gratitude for the rest of my life for that, and I am proud to say it.