

Jordan Paschal – NC

Washington Week was a thrill to say the very least and will most definitely be one of the biggest highlights of my life. Although the schedule was demanding and tiring, the events that we participated in every day and the speakers we interacted with more than made up for the lack of energy I had every day! Since returning home, my thoughts have often drifted towards my experience a short time ago and they always bring me a smile.

I always think of my co-delegates who I befriended while in Washington and I often think of standing in the East Room of the White House to meet the President of the United States, Barack Obama. Although we only knew each other for seven days, by the departure day arrived, an observer would have noted that we seemed like close friends or even family. The debates and discussions held throughout the week were very stimulating and for me were a great experience since I can't have political discussions with anyone at home due to their lack of political knowledge.

The obvious event that most everyone would pick as their highlight of the week and my personal highlight of the week, was meeting the President. Recently, the health care reform bill was passed after a year of debate and President Obama spoke on the bill's passage the night it passed in the East Room and he also signed the bill in the East Room. We met the President in that room!! Millions of people across America can say they saw or met President Obama at a campaign rally or some other political function, but not many people in the entire world can say that they met the President at his house (THE White House)!!!

There were many other experiences throughout the week that were really great as well. I personally enjoyed meeting my Senators, Richard Burr and Kay Hagan, as well as the tour of the Capitol and of the Senate Gallery. I also greatly enjoyed meeting our country's newest Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, and the tour of the Supreme Court. The Pentagon as well as Arlington brought in the focus to me of the two wars we are waging and how policy made on Capitol Hill and in the White House affect the men and women serving in our military.

Speaking of military, our military mentors were AMAZING. The men and women who served as our soundboards for the week were great to talk to about their personal experiences in the military as well as current political issues and their thoughts on them. I believe that Washington Week had another dimension added to it by being given the chance to speak to these great Americans and took our experience to another level.

There are too many experiences, big and small, that I had during this week to fit on paper and just like words sometimes aren't enough to describe a picture, they aren't fitting enough to describe a week with some of the smartest students in America, leaders of the greatest country in the world, and the best military members our country has to offer. I believe that the 104 delegates assembled in the Mayflower Hotel will be the leaders of our country in the future in business, government, technology, and a whole host of other fields. Only time will tell where we end up and what we accomplish, but I feel that I can confidently say that many of our lives changed for the better after Washington Week 2010.