

When I look back at my experiences during the Forty-Eighth Annual United States Senate Youth Program, I can summarize everything with one word- humility. I am a leader in many activities in my community and state, but before leaving for Washington, D.C., I had a sense of hubris; I thought that I was the person to whom anyone could ask questions and receive answers. However, learning from leaders in government and the media, listening to the President of the United States, and learning from my peers eradicated this hubris, and has instilled in its place a sense of humility.

Gaining the insight of leaders in government and the media was a truly memorable experience. I was informed that the Program provided for extensive question-and-answer sessions; however, when I arrived in Washington, D.C., I was astonished at how extensive the question-and-answer periods with the various speakers actually were. Furthermore, it was truly humbling to know that leaders in the government and media were willing to take time out of their busy schedules to share with us their perspectives on contemporary issues facing the nation- healthcare, the judiciary, national security, the economy- and discuss what we can learn from the history of the nation and what challenges we can expect as the United States moves forward.

The United States made a giant leap forward with the election of the first African-American President, Barack Obama. He inspired the nation with hope- hope for success, hope for progress, and hope for the future. Before meeting the President, I was in awe at his achievements and successes. After visiting the President, I learned that at the end of the day, he is another humble American who always remembers the true meaning of leadership. I will never forget his simple axiom of service, “Don’t spend your time thinking about who you want to be; spend your time thinking about what you want to do.”

“Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you,” declared Nancy Erickson, the Secretary of the United States Senate. Indeed, I fulfilled this phrase by surrounding myself with 103 peers with whom I share common interests- government, service, and democracy. I was humbled by how much I learned from my fellow delegates through our discussions about a range of subjects. I was humbled by acknowledging that although I may have known much about a multitude of topics, the quest for knowledge is never ending. I was humbled by knowing that if I have the honor of serving the public in the future, I will serve alongside 103 outstanding leaders.

Brian Lamb, President and CEO of C-SPAN, said it best- “Humility.” Washington Week was the most humbling experience of my life. I will not hold in vain the knowledge I gained

from the various speakers. I will never forget the lessons in leadership from the President. I shall not regress from the wider perspective I gained from my fellow delegates about the issues facing the nation. I went to Washington, D.C. to become a better leader; I returned home with the knowledge, the understanding, and the humility which make a true leader.