

Tauger, Nathan – WV

An interesting feeling that I'd like to think most people are familiar with would be the sensation of waking up due to the ring of an alarm or wake-up call and trying to piece together your immediate thoughts and setting. There is something special about these few seconds of confusion when you realize, "Oh, I'm in Washington D.C." There is something even more special when you realize, "Oh, I'm meeting the President today."

These little reality checks were prevalent during Washington Week. It was easy to overhear people verbally pinching themselves before meeting Sonia Sotomayor, entering the capitol and supreme court, or seeing a well known reporter. And these pinches were necessary. Washington Week was a dream, but a feasible dream. We weren't just tourists admiring a one-time destination. We were letting the sights of D.C., the wisdom of our military mentors, and the savvy of some of our most intelligent leaders, soak into our minds and ambitions.

To go on with every anecdote or emotion I can recall from Washington Week would take several pages, so I will close with one story from the week.

My group had just been introduced to our military mentor, Lt. Viezca and we were returning to the Colonial Room in the Mayflower. The group spread out through the room. I introduced myself to a few people and orbited some of the tables, feeling slightly nervous because I wasn't sure how to approach an ongoing conversation. I overheard something about what was to become the groan-inducing topic of the week, healthcare, and I grabbed a chair. I squeezed my way in to the circle that had formed and listened to people eloquently arguing their differing points of view. I thought of something to say regarding the fundamental debate of a public option. My heart began to beat a little faster and I started to sweat as I prepared to interject with my point of view. I said what I wanted to say, and everyone listened! A few people agreed with me and the discussion continued. It went on for a couple more minutes until the chaperones in the room made us go upstairs. As we slowly walked to the elevator, finishing our discussion, a topic for the next day was decided. I returned to my room with a smile and a sense of fulfillment and anticipation.

I am very grateful to have been able to meet and converse with so many impressive individuals, from the co-delegates to the speakers to the military mentors. I doubt any of us will forget Washington Week any time soon.