

Iktae Park – CA - 2011

“A death of a man evokes grief but a death of a patriot evokes reverence.” These were the last words from my journal entry on the visit to the Arlington cemetery during the Washington Week. Like many other people, I used to ask myself “What do I live for? What is the purpose of my life? And If I do find it, would I be willing to give away my life for this value?” I left the cemetery with reverence to all the soldiers, not only for fighting for our rights and freedom but for the fact that they found a value that was much more important even their life themselves. They were willing to sacrifice their lives for the wellbeing of others. They valued the public and posterity of America much more themselves. Looking back at this wonderful week at the capital, I think the above quote sums up all that the United States Senate Youth Program has taught me. I learned about the importance of public service and what it means to dedicate my life for the nation. It is after this week when I promised myself to be a lifelong patriot for this great nation.

Every guest speaker was a role model for me in that they were true patriots who had genuinely dedicated their service to the country. Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska has been my role model for several years for his dedication to public service and hence his archetypal presence as a patriot. His willingness to work hard and not give up in bringing his visions for the state of Nebraska to come true had changed the heart of Nebraskans into voting in the then underdog candidate and motivated me to excel. His past near two decades of public service in the state and the federal government showed me how much he valued the people of Nebraska, and how he would fit the definition of a true patriot. He is the type of patriot I want to be. I want to serve my district from state legislature, to the state executive and then if necessary at even the federal level. I want to be in politics and make policies that can help the people. If it was not for this program I would not have met Senator Nelson and many others who have influenced me so greatly.

103 other people influenced as much as the great guest speakers of every night. My fellow youth senators beyond no doubt were true representatives of patriotism, hope, and future. They were the best of the best; they were the perfect mix of talent and skills. I have met great people who have accomplished so much at such a young age and they were another source of inspiration for me. I am grateful like no other to have been able to meet my future competitors, my future co workers and my friends for life.

United States Senate Youth Program taught me many life lessons. It led me to make my life decision of dedicating my life to serving the public. It gave me lifelong friends and a network for me to set foot in my political career. It gave me a life changing experience to meet and be encouraged by the greatest leaders of the world. No wonder I found this week to be the best week of my life. I have full faith that the United States Senate Youth Program will continue to light flaming passion for public service in future youth senator's hearts. In just a few years USSYP alumni will meet each other at the state governments, the U.S. military bases, philanthropic NGOs, the congressional chambers, and even the White House. We will meet each other as patriots who will lead on lives of respect and dignity with a passion for democracy, freedom, and public service.