

Hasher Nisar – CT - 2011

To be honest, I do not have any words to explain Washington Week. I am sitting here in front of my computer trying to look for words to sum up the week. All I can say is that it was an incredible opportunity and experience. As a kid who moved to Pakistan in 2000 and came back to the States about two years ago, I never expected to be selected for an honor such as representing Connecticut in Washington, DC but as Senator Ben Nelson said, “If you don’t try, you’ll always be a loser.”

Arriving at the Mayflower Hotel on March 5th, I knew that the week was going to be full of adventures. The best part of the program was all the new friends I made, the 103 other delegates. Whether it was sitting in the Grand Ballroom at night having a philosophical discussion or having a debate on abortion, we respected the views of each other. We acknowledged each other’s opinion. At the same time, we would all come together and play ninja.

Most importantly, I will never forget the Military Mentors. By spending a week with them and listening to their stories, I realized what the military truly meant to our country. Many people fail to realize that. It is because of them that our country is safe.

Along with the other 103 delegates, I had the opportunity to meet leaders from the executive branch, legislative branch, and judicial branch. Some of my favorite guest speakers were Justice Clarence Thomas, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, Senator Ben Nelson, Senator John Cornyn, Director of the CIA Leon Panetta, CEO of C-SPAN Brian Lamb, and Ambassador of Turkey Namik Tan.

One of the funniest moments of Washington Week was when someone took my coat by accident. I was going around looking for it on the racks in the Grand Ballroom but couldn’t find it. There was only one coat left so I decided to wear it and then afterwards I could figure who took mine and just exchange. As I was just about to wear the coat, CEO Brian Lamb walks in and says, “That must be my coat.” I said, “So you’re wearing my coat?” He started laughing and said, “Yes. Good thing you didn’t leave, otherwise we would have both been in trouble. My keys were in there.” After he left, I realized that the Founder and CEO of C-SPAN had almost taken my long coat to work.

I have a lot of stories from Washington Week but I will talk about one in particular: That was meeting the President of the United States Barack Obama.

When I came back to United States in 2008, Senator Obama was running for President. When he won on November 4th, I was sitting in my living room waiting for him to give his victory speech. At the end of his speech, I said, “I wish I could meet Obama someday.” The day I found out about my selection for the United States Senate Youth Program, I had tears in my eyes because for me it was a dream come true. I had the chance to meet President Obama. The second I saw him walk out of the elevator, walking towards us, I could not believe it. I whispered, “Is that seriously President Obama? Are you serious?” I could not believe it. When he finished his remarks, he said he would only take two questions and when he called on me, I said to myself, “YES!” I asked him, “What do you like most about your job?” He started off, “Well, I got a really nice plane...” After leaving the White House, I realized that I had met some of the top politicians in the country, people who run our country and make some of the important decisions.

I learned many lessons from Washington Week but the most important thing I learned was that nothing is impossible. If you put your mind to something, if you’re motivated, if you’re determined, then you will definitely reach your goal. The stories of my fellow USSYP members, military mentors, and the leaders I met have inspired me to believe in myself. Washington Week will stay with me for the rest of my life and it is something that I will never forget. It was the beginning of my work, not the end. My commitment to public service will continue as I grow up. As Thomas Jefferson said, “There is a debt of service due from every man to his country, proportioned to the bounties which nature and fortune have measured to him.” My service to this great nation that has given me so many opportunities to excel and succeed will continue as long as I live. I would like to thank the USSYP Staff, the Hearst Foundation, the Deputy Director Lynn DeSmet, and the Program Director Rayne Guilford for this amazing and incredible opportunity. Thank you.