

James Konsky – IL - 2011

From the chocolate capitol rotunda dessert to being three feet away from the leader of the free world, Washington Week will be an experience I will never forget. My experience at the United States Senate Youth Program Washington Week was incredible. There is simply nothing I can say that would do the program justice. I had the privilege of introducing the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, gaining access to the CIA compound, receiving an insider's view of the workings of each branch of the government, and seeing many landmarks throughout our nation's capital. It is one thing to admire Washington through C-SPAN and CNN at home in Illinois, but it is quite another to stand at the foot of the Capitol and feel the energy and power that is our national government.

When I arrived at the Mayflower Hotel I felt out of place. Elegant chandeliers lined the hallways and delegates from places ranging from Alaska to Ohio were already engaged in a healthcare debate. However, as soon as I checked in, received my USSYP satchel, and sat down at an overcrowded table of my fellow delegates, I realized that I was in the presence of students just like myself; students who, back home, are viewed as political junkies, geeks, nerds, and, most of all, leaders. For me, this was the highlight of my week. To be around one hundred and three of the most intelligent, motivated, passionate young adults in the world is something that, before Washington Week 2011, I could only dream about. I learned so much from each delegate that I met and have made numerous friends for life; pending we are not on different sides of the aisle when we return to Washington in a few short years.

In our society today, there is much concern over our nation's future. However, after spending a week with my fellow delegates I am not worried. I have seen the intellect and desire of a group of very talented young people passionate about the betterment of our nation and can assure that America will be in great hands in the years to come. Thank you to the Hearst Foundations for providing me with the experience of a lifetime.