

Mallory Carr- WY - 2011

Washington Week is definitely a unique experience. We were able to take a VIP tour of D.C., seeing all the best sites and meeting with the most important and influential people. The best part of the trip was being able to hear from some of the headline-makers in Washington and being able to ask them questions directly.

Justice of the Supreme Court Clarence Thomas was a clear favorite speaker. He was surprisingly relatable and embodied everything the phrase "down to earth" is supposed to mean. He talked with us bluntly and honestly, answering as many questions as he could. Justice Thomas shared his life stories and experiences openly with us, allowing us to learn a great deal about him and the court system. Another favorite was Undersecretary for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero. Her work as CEO of Accion, a microfinance and microlending organization, helped to combat poverty and advance the status of women in developing countries. She continues her work of service in her current position. Being able to ask both of these people questions was beyond unbelievable and an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life. I will always remember their speeches and responses.

The amazing speakers were interspersed among other events which included seeing museums, touring galleries, and the Senate Reception. Being able to see these sites alone would have made for an incredible trip. We were able to see an actual DaVinci and exhibits that most of us only are able to read about. However great these were though, they pale in comparison to the Senate Reception. I was able to actually talk with both of my Senators on policy issues that concern my state one on one. This was a rare opportunity. I learned what their jobs were like and what they were doing about problems in our country that I am personally interested in. Along with these, I got to learn more about the interaction between the Senators. Senator Barrasso (R-WY) mentioned he had dinner at Senator Kerry's (D-MA) house the other week and joked with Senator Lieberman (I-CT) as we were getting ready to take our picture. Even talking to their aids was an opportunity. I learned what it takes to work in such a position and how to get there.

The overall experience exceeded my expectations. I was able to speak with extremely accomplished military mentors about the military and their experiences. Conversation with my fellow delegates is unlike any other that I have at home. It was fascinating to learn about life in their home states and hear their ideas and perspectives on a variety of issues. It was also just plain fun. I will not soon forget the night my roommate, Erica Turret (FL), and I stayed up too late talking and a security guard came to our door. Or when we were able to persuade Romeris Pettiford (MS) to put a flower in his hair at the Senate Reception for a quick picture. Or the last night when Sam Foggan (MD) and I stayed up the entire time having adventures. There are countless other memories of the people I shared this once in a lifetime experience with that made it the best of my life.

We owe a great deal to the Hearst Foundations. If it were not for them, we would not even be able to dream of taking a picture with the President of the United States or of hearing from the CIA Director himself while at the actual CIA headquarters. It was an honor to have these experiences and have met these people and I value it more than I could ever express.