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New Hampshire Delegate 2024

### Washington Week Reflection

The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) was an exceptional, once-in-a-lifetime experience. In this program, I had the opportunity to meet and learn directly from leaders at the highest levels of our government. Together, with students from across the country, we gained a deeper appreciation for our government and the importance of our American democracy. For one special week, 104 delegates spent time exploring and learning about the politics and policies that influence our lives, our nation, and our world.

The USSYP offered a unique educational experience with a focus on government, diplomacy, and civil service. Conversation was a focal point. There were moments of great formal and informal conversation: formally, in discussions we had with government officials and policymakers and, informally, in the late-night chats with my fellow delegates. Throughout the program, we debated different ideas and opinions born from diverse experiences. As we confront an increasingly polarized world and political climate, the civil discourse fostered at the USSYP was encouraging. I was left, at the end of Washington Week, with a hopefulness for future political action driven by my generation.

The USSYP invited us to take an up-close look at the mechanisms that drive our nation forward. As we learned about the inner workings of Washington, D.C., we visited some of America's most storied locations. From Mount Vernon where we studied the words of President George Washington to the National Archives where we ate dinner alongside the Constitution, we began our week with the earliest sparks of our democracy. We toured the national monuments and met leaders in the working halls of government. As our week came to a close, we visited the

White House where we watched the State of the Union followed by a personalized debrief with the President and First Lady.

It was a great honor to represent New Hampshire at the USSYP. With unparalleled access to the people and places that power our government, Washington Week opened our eyes and excited our minds. For me, this program was enriching and empowering, reinforcing my interest in public service. At a time when democracy is at a critical inflection point, the USSYP prepared us to take action and make real change. I hope to take what I learned during Washington Week and employ those lessons to make a positive difference in my community. Washington Week, truly, was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.