

## Ena Waring, TX – 2019

“Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention please?” The 57<sup>th</sup> annual Senate Youth Program (USSYP) was an experience that has assured me of not only my future aspirations but of the future of our nation. Throughout a week in Washington, D.C., I was able to meet brilliant people, step into places where history has been made, and learn more about our government and society which made me re-think my own political beliefs. Throughout the program, 104 student delegates were able to come together from across the country with the point to always be asking questions; the most common one during the event being, “Does it get any better than this?”

Our very first speaker had a profound impact with his words and truly laid the foundation for what the rest of the week would entail. It would be about gaining more knowledge and expanding ones’ perspective by “drawing close to you the most brilliant minds of society.” Jack Warren, a Revolutionary War historian, was able to remind all of us to look around. I personally had never been surrounded by more diversity, intelligence, and drive. In the following days, I had conversations with fellow delegates that had been on TV, worked for political campaigns, and led movements or rallies. Even though Warren studies the past, he did me a big favor in thinking about the future. In order to achieve success and create change, we need a new paradigm, which comes by building consensus with others that share a passion.

In addition to connecting with incredible peers, I got to chat with Military Mentors, and participate in Q&A discussions with Chief Justice Roberts, Ben Carson, and Italian Ambassador Armando Varricchio (to name a few). These speakers really opened my eyes to a whole new world I was unaware of. As an American citizen, I follow what’s on the media and news about our country, but to hear directly from important officials about their own policies and thoughts about the present was thought-provoking. My favorite night was the Senate Reception, where my fellow Texas delegate and I met our senators, Ted Cruz, and John Cornyn. We were able to spend a few minutes talking about their roles in the Senate and what they were working on. At that moment, it felt real. It felt possible. That not only I but all 104 delegates could have a positive impact on this country and serve the public in various capacities. After all, we also walked around the White House and met President Donald Trump. By the end of the week, all of us were feeling like anything is possible, including our craziest goals.

The opportunities to network were beyond compare, but something else I will truly treasure from USSYP was the behind-the-scenes tours. From walking through the halls of Senate offices, to actually stepping foot into The Supreme Court, to eating dinner a hundred feet away from the U.S. Constitution, and getting a glimpse of the Library of Congress, I was constantly amazed by everything D.C. had to offer. It made me excited to one day come back and leave my own footprint since I had stepped where history has been made.

Specifically, as I looked out the window of the East Wing of the White House, I made a promise to one day return. The United States Senate Youth Program will always remain a fond memory, especially at the end when we all sang “Lean on Me,” a sure foreshadowing of the support we will give each other as public servants. We truly put the US in USSYP, and it made me wonder, does it get any better than this?