

Molly Cain – DE - 2011

In my short eighteen years of life, there have been few moments during which I have consciously thought “this will be a terrific story for my grandchildren.” Well, that was before the United States Senate Youth Program. USSYP was truly the week of a lifetime; every single day, hour, and minute was filled with exciting events and memories that I will be retelling for decades. I saw, met, and even talked to my childhood heroes. Not only did I stand fifteen feet away from President Obama, our Commander in Chief and the leader of the free world, I was able to ask him a question and listen, with stars in my eyes and a tremendously goofy grin on my face, as he gave a thoughtful and articulate answer. If that weren’t enough, I was able to go to the Central Intelligence Agency and was picked to be dressed up in a disguise, a memory that I am certain will entertain my descendants. I was utterly captivated by Secretary Arne Duncan’s speech about education and was inspired to enact education policy change in the future. I laughed along with my fellow delegates as Secretary Steven Chu expressed his confusion and frustrations with the American desire for fast, gas-guzzling cars. Of course, I will never forget the time I spent in the hallowed halls of the Supreme Court, actively involved in a candid question and answer session with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. I will always fondly remember the Senate Reception when the Delaware senators, Senator Thomas Carper and Senator Christopher Coons, accidentally arrived at the same time because they were so excited to meet the Delaware delegates, exemplifying the Delaware tradition of involved and active public servants.

During USSYP, my fellow delegates and I met the champions, the most valuable players, and the rock stars, so to speak, of the political sphere. Amongst the engaging speeches and the plethora of famous faces, I have a couple of favorite speakers. First on the list would of course be my fellow Delaware delegate, Jacob Sackett-Sanders of Wilmington, Delaware, who helped me teach the other delegates which state was truly the best: Delaware. Anthony Fitten of Iowa tried to promote his great state, but the engaging Judge Henry supported Jacob and my assertions as he extolled Delaware and its “lovely corporate law” during his fascinating speech early in the week. I was also intrigued by Scotie Conner of Oklahoma and Meg MacInnes of New Hampshire who spoke of the hero generation in the final speech of the week. Additionally, the fantastic military mentors rank high among my favorite speakers. Lieutenant Mills’ recollections of her work on President Obama’s inauguration, Lieutenant Files’ tales of the Naval Academy, and Lieutenant Coffman’s stories about *everything* military related were informative, entertaining, and heart-warming. As a USSYP delegate, I was able to meet Kal Penn, but I was also fortunate enough to spend a week with some of my best friends and future leaders such as Alex Lichtenstein of Virginia, Sam Dunkle of South Dakota, James Konsky of Illinois, and Ryan McDonnell of the Department of Defense Education Activity. I met young men who proved that southern gentlemen are not a myth, including Braydon Jones of Texas, Jackson Pruitt of Alabama, and Parker Lawson of Kentucky. I made connections that will last a lifetime, proven by the exciting reunions with Eva Guidarini of West Virginia, Stephanie Warner of Pennsylvania, and Jordan Rasmusson of Minnesota at various college campuses. I talked policy, debated hot topics, discussed key issues, and even played ninja with 103 of the brightest minds in America. Before USSYP, I didn’t know anyone from North or South Dakota, Kansas, or Maine. I am incredibly fortunate to now have a nationwide network of support and a coalition of passionate youth that will work with me to change the world. My life has been forever changed by the United States Senate Youth Program; I now have the experience, tools, and allies necessary to make an impact on society. After our week in the nation’s capital,

there is no doubt in my mind that my fellow USSYP 2011 delegates and I will create a better world and continue to make memories that are worthy bedtime stories for my grandchildren.