

Matthew Munsey – GA - 2011

There are really no words that can adequately describe how much Washington Week changed my life. I knew the United States Senate Youth Program was an incredible opportunity to see Washington, D.C. in action and that hundreds vied to be a delegate to the program from their state; but beyond this, I did not realize how incredible it would be. From the four course meals to the elegant Mayflower Hotel, everything about Washington Week was unforgettable. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, born in Savannah, Georgia, brought a face to the Supreme Court, and because I have lived in Savannah for several years now, it gave me the opportunity to glean insight from a high-ranking government official from my hometown and brought home that anyone from anywhere can climb the ladder of success.

Justice Thomas was incredibly personable, several times joking with us saying that he “wouldn’t have been eligible for the program,” because of its high academic standards. He even shared his feelings on being a Justice on the most powerful court in the United States. The lack of anonymity was something Justice Thomas wished he did not have to lose when appointed, and coined the phrase, “don’t YouTube me, bro...,” when asked about Facebook and Twitter. Never would I have expected for a Justice on the United States Supreme Court to be so honest and blunt about his job, something that set Justice Thomas apart from all the other speakers, even though they were all outstanding.

Our military mentors were phenomenal, and put personalities behind all five branches of the military. I got to know my mentor, Lieutenant Jonathan Shumate from the U.S. Coast Guard, and made friends within my mentor group (from D.C., Idaho, Missouri, New Jersey, and Nebraska) so well, even in such a relatively short period of time, because all of us had the same interests in politics and government. It was incredible to meet others my age who have my same interests. No matter where we hailed from—be it Alaska, Europe, or Texas (politically polar opposites to say the least)—all of us shared a common bond, and that was our passion for our country’s future. These feelings among others my age contained in the small confines of the Mayflower Hotel will never escape me, and I will be forever grateful of the opportunity I was given to participate in the program.