

Will Fernandez - IL - 2011

On March 12, I woke up at 2 a.m. to board a plane headed from Reagan International Airport back to Champaign after an amazing week in Washington D.C. As a part of the United States Senate Youth Program, I had the opportunity to talk and listen to some of the most influential people in the United States including President Barack Obama, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and multiple U.S. Senators and Congressmen. People that I watched on TV and read about in newspapers were right in front of me. It was a truly magical event.

From the White House to the Pentagon to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the entire week moved seamlessly. Not only were the speakers eloquent and interesting, but each and every delegate was exceptional. I felt in awe just with the talent that I had the opportunity to be with every single day. I know that some of the relationships that I made during that one week in Washington will last over my entire lifetime. I could not be any happier with how the trip went and what I received from it.

I will forever remember this week. Be it when Supreme Court Justice shook my hand and told me "Good Luck" or when President Barack Obama said that he could sleep easier knowing that our country had young people like us to lead it in the right direction, each moment seemed like almost a dream come true. I would never trade this experience for anything.

The trip was one of the greatest experiences that I have ever had and I am still baffled that it actually happened. I will never forget the amazing people that I met through this experience and I cannot wait to see what they end up doing in their careers. I am always reminded by Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem, "Success," about what we can do to change our world. "...To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded". I truly believe that the people that go through this program do their very best to succeed this way and change the world in a positive way.