

Sukesh Kamesh, KS – 2023

When I got the email from The Hearst Foundations that I was selected as a United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) delegate, I was met with overbearing happiness. No - literally I was crying in tears of joy. Now this is coming from a guy that barely cries at all. Right then and there grinning from ear to ear I began to pack my bags for the 2023 Washington Week.

My class was the first to return to an in-person experience since the pandemic. After a long busy day of travel cancellations, I finally walked into The Mayflower Hotel and saw a room full of bustling peers that have accomplished so much in life at such a young age. I would be lying if I said I did not have any source of impostor syndrome at all, but the togetherness of the Class of 2023 makes us so unique. Even though we disagreed on some topics, we strove to find common ground.

This experience was like no other for me as I have grown up in my homogeneous rural Kansas community. Meeting so many people of different races, ethnicities, cultures, states, and backgrounds not only made me more culturally competent but educated me on there is so much more to see in the world. It inspired me to travel. I hope to study abroad and really experience more of these unique cultures at some point in college. For me personally, my favorite speakers were Senator John Hickenlooper, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley, Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, and Associate Attorney General Kristen Clarke. The senator showed me with his Joe Manchin jokes that it is ok to disagree with others, and even joke around about it, but it is vital we try to strive for change in our country. So many people say we should be the change, but we have to take initiative.

In the words of General Mark Milley, “you don’t have to serve in the military as long as you serve.” Those words still are in my memory today almost an entire week after the experience. I also enjoyed his joke of “I can have you all on your knees begging for mercy in less than 72 hours.” You guys probably won’t include that in the Delegate Yearbook but it was worth a shot. Also, these words definitely got my attention as I was exhausted from the long week, and it got me through the rest of Friday.

Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke’s inspiring words on challenging the status quo and fighting for what we believe in were so motivating and inspiring me to continue to positively impact my community. In one of my college essays, I said, if we want something to change, we have to be the change. In a time where there are children losing their lives at school, people struggling to receive adequate healthcare, and when we face a crossroads for our democracy, I KNOW that the USSYP Class of 2023 will solve all of these problems. I believe in the future of this country and I know that we can change it for a better, brighter future for all of the future generations to come.

Finally, just one last time -U S, S, Y, P-ee-ee, you belong with me-e-eeee, you belong with me-eee. (Shawn’s final song)

Thank you to The Hearst Foundations, the Kansas Board of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, my principal Mr. Andy Albright, my teachers, my parents, and God for allowing me to have this amazing experience.