



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Education
& Early Development**

DIVISION OF INNOVATION &
EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

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Dear parents, teachers, principals, and superintendents:

The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) has begun its statewide selection process. In March, two Alaskan students will join 104 other delegates for the program's 65th annual Washington Week—an intensive week-long educational program about the workings of the Senate and the federal government overall. USSYP is sponsored by the US Senate and privately funded by The Hearst Foundation.

The 65th annual United States Senate Youth Program Washington Week is being planned for **6-13 March 2027**. The entire week will be planned and coordinated by the Hearst Foundation. It will include many specific functions and events at national landmarks. This will be an amazing opportunity for students to access the halls of federal government and members of all three branches of government. It will be an extremely full week of site visits, speakers, and events, and personal free time will be limited. Applicants may wish to consider this when applying.

State delegates will have outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to public service. They generally rank in the top one percent of their states academically. After Washington Week, delegates continue to excel and develop impressive qualities that are often directed toward public service. **Each state delegate will receive a \$12,500 undergraduate college scholarship.** Students must attend the entire program to receive the scholarship. Please note that the scholarship amount has been **increased** from the previous amount of \$10,000.

Student delegates will visit Capitol Hill, the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, the Supreme Court, and other historic sites in Washington. The agenda routinely includes meetings with Senators, the President, Cabinet Secretaries, a Justice of the Supreme Court, senior members of the national media, and other policy makers. **Students may need to have a Real ID to access many federal sites.** Please keep this in mind.

The delegate selection is administered by each state's chief school officer in cooperation with high school principals. Eligible delegates must be:

1. Current high school ***juniors or seniors***
2. An ***elected*** student officer for the ***entire*** 2026-2027 academic years (*Please reference the 2027 brochure for a complete list of eligible positions.*)
3. Residents of Alaska

Each student must be a resident of the United States and currently enrolled in a public or private secondary school located in the state (including for these purposes the District of Columbia) in which either one of his or her parents or guardians legally resides. Exceptions to the residency rule are made for the Department of Defense Education Activity and for states with schools operating under interstate education compacts.

This year's application is entirely online. Student complete the application via Google Forms [here](https://forms.gle/78egDTgbaQ5BbCDa8) (<https://forms.gle/78egDTgbaQ5BbCDa8>) and will upload required documents via the form. There is a detailed checklist of required submission items included on the form. Please use this checklist to ensure your application is complete. Incomplete applications will **not** be considered. Following this announcement is the 2027 brochure and an essay on the experience by one of last year's delegates.

The Alaska application deadline is **23 October 2026 at 5pm.**

The candidate selection process is three part:

1. Students who submit complete applications will be initially ranked based on a rubric provided by the Hearst Foundation.
2. The top ten applicants will be invited to take the 2027 United State Senate Youth Program Public Affairs and History Exam. This is a proctored exam that will affect an applicant's total score and potential selection as a USSYP candidate.
3. After performance on the USSYP exam is factored in, the top five applicants may also be asked to sit for a Zoom interview with the selection committee. Performance during this interview will affect the applicant's total score and potential selection as a USSYP candidate.

The names of students selected will be formally announced mid-December. For more information, interested students in Alaska should contact either their high school principal or myself via the contact information below. They may also access information via the DEED Scholarships & Recognition webpage at <https://education.alaska.gov/recognitionprograms/>

Sincerely,

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Apply for the 2026-2027 United States Senate
Youth Program online at:

<https://forms.gle/Vm6a7r18P8N6cFTR6>

(You will need a Google affiliated email address. Most Alaskan
school district student accounts meet this requirement.)

Andy Zhang , AK – 2026

Sitting in the dimmed theater during intermission of *The Nutcracker*, I opened my phone and saw the email: I had been selected as a delegate to the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP). In that moment, excitement came instantly—I would travel to Washington, D.C., meeting national leaders, and engaging with students from across the country. But just as quickly, excitement gave way to doubt. I wondered whether I would belong among delegates whose achievements I imagined would far exceed my own. I worried about what to say, how to act, and whether I would measure up to such a distinguished group. That uncertainty disappeared almost immediately upon arriving in Washington.

From the very first conversations, I realized my assumptions had been wrong. The delegates were accomplished, yes—but more importantly, they were genuine, thoughtful, and open. We talked easily, joked freely, and became friends right away.

One of the most memorable moments of the week came during our visit to the Supreme Court. Sitting beneath the towering red drapes and facing the nine chairs where some of the nation's most consequential decisions are made, I felt the gravity of the institution. We met Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, who shared her journey—from public defender to Supreme Court Justice—in a way that made the law feel deeply human. Her reflections emphasized that judging is not only about legal reasoning, but also about responsibility, perspective, and lived experience. That conversation challenged me to think more carefully about the balance between personal values and impartial decision-making.

Our meeting with my home-state senator, Lisa Murkowski, was equally meaningful. Despite her demanding schedule, she took the time to speak with us candidly about her work and her responsibilities to Alaska. Her openness and dedication reminded me that public service, at its best, is rooted in commitment to people rather than party.

At the same time, Washington Week exposed me to the more complicated realities of public life. In some sessions with elected officials, I noticed how carefully responses were framed. Even outside of televised settings, our more difficult questions were often met with polished, indirect answers. These moments revealed the tension between authenticity and public messaging—an inherent challenge in leadership. Rather than discouraging me, this insight pushed me to think more critically about accountability and the importance of clarity and honesty in public discourse.

Before Washington Week, I expected the highlight to be meeting influential leaders. Instead, the most meaningful moments came in conversations with our mentor, Lieutenant Commander Jordan Spector over breakfast and the late-night talks with fellow delegates. We discussed not only policy, but our communities and personal experiences. Mr. Spector's questions pushed me to slow down, listen, and reconsider my assumptions.

We didn't always agree, but disagreement never felt divisive. Someone from Kentucky could see an issue differently than someone from Minnesota, and instead of creating distance, those differences made the discussion richer. I became more open, more thoughtful, and more willing to change my mind. I came to understand that true public service means engaging across differences and growing through dialogue.

Washington Week showed me that leadership is not about standing above others, but standing with them—listening, learning, and growing together. Looking back, I think about that moment in the theater when I first opened the USSYP acceptance email, unsure if I belonged. What began as uncertainty ended as clarity: I not only belonged, but left with a responsibility to lead with humility, openness, and purpose.

Erik Vincent, AK – 2026

As I stepped onto the Alaska Airlines jet, set to take me on nine hours of travel to the United States capital, my mind (albeit briefly) ran over what I expected my next week to hold. Thinking simply based on what I had heard from past sources, I expected many prominent, “headline-y” guests, and a very focused program itinerary devoted entirely to surveying the inner workings of the national government. A week later, stepping onto my then Anchorage-bound jet, I again mentally ran the week over.

Washington Week, while it did indeed showcase exemplary figures of the capital and give us a close view of the central government, proved to be an experience of so much more and a core lifetime memory. Through the entire week, I built friendships and had meaningful conversations with some of the most amazing people that the United States has to offer, from Hawaii to Maine and everywhere in between. My constant thought was that the entire environment of the program was one of tremendous hope and optimism, especially so given its superimposition over a political landscape of today that is so often divisive and vitriolic.

A central theme of the program, whether formally or otherwise, was that of finding common humanity among all, regardless of demographic, political persuasion, or any other preconceived notion that might discriminate. Though none of us said it then, we delegates all quietly understood in our discussions with another that everyone had the same ultimate goal of creating the best America possible.

The lived experiences of all our program speakers added to the hopefulness of the entire week. Senators known to disagree bitterly on the floor revealed their truths of good personal relations with each other, and the same sentiments were echoed by many on other levels of government. Still more inspiration was gleaned from other narratives, such as that of Major General and NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, who defied long odds to become one of the very first Black astronauts for the United States; and FEMA Associate Administrator Brian Kamoie, whose words, “adversity reveals character,” replay through my mind periodically.

The week in a broader sense showed me the best and the brightest of my generation, however clichéd such phrasing may be. As I met my fellow “delegates and distinguished guests,” I felt an excitement for the future that previously had not existed to near the magnitude in which it manifested then. I left the ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel feeling not just enriched with wisdom and experience from our speakers and guests, but joyful that the leaders of our future would be all the same exemplary leaders that I met over the course of the program. My time with the United States Senate Youth Program felt almost transcendental, and left me with a fulfillment that is too magnificent to accurately describe in words; to all future delegates, it will be one of the most incredible weeks of your life.



UNITED STATES SENATE ★ YOUTH PROGRAM ★

EDUCATION • LEADERSHIP • PUBLIC SERVICE • RESPECT

65TH ANNUAL WASHINGTON WEEK | MARCH 6-13, 2027

104 STUDENTS WILL BE SELECTED FOR A WEEK-LONG GOVERNMENT AND LEADERSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM, AND EACH WILL RECEIVE A \$12,500 UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP.

The United States Senate unanimously passed a resolution in 1962 creating the UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM (USSYP), a national nonpartisan initiative. Each year, exceptional high school students with proven leadership skills are selected to attend the USSYP. The program is designed to deepen their understanding of America's political processes and strengthen their resolve to pursue careers in public service.

The USSYP brings the highest-level officials from each branch of government to meet with this outstanding group of young leaders — two high school juniors or seniors from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and overseas military-connected high schools — for an intensive week-long education and leadership program. The program is merit-based and highly competitive. Each student will also receive a \$12,500 undergraduate college scholarship, with encouragement to pursue coursework in history and political science. Now in its 65th year, the program has been fully funded since inception by THE HEARST FOUNDATIONS as an enduring commitment to preparing young people for civic leadership in our participatory democracy.

Numbering more than 6,400, USSYP alumni are leaders in government, law, business, education, journalism, the military, medicine, healthcare, higher education and many other fields. Alumni have served as elected and appointed officials at all levels of government, including U.S. Senators and Representatives, a Secretary of the Cabinet, a Governor, senior political advisors to the President of the United States, ambassadors and federal judges. The hallmark of their success is the desire to serve.

THE PROGRAM

The 65th Annual United States Senate Youth Program Washington Week will be held March 6–13, 2027, in Washington, D.C.

Delegates will hear major policy addresses by Senators, Cabinet members, officials from the Pentagon and Department of State, leaders of other federal agencies and senior members of the national media. Delegates also traditionally participate in a meeting with a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and the President of the United States. Most speaking events include in-depth question-and-answer sessions.

The Hearst Foundations will pay all expenses for Washington Week including transportation, hotel and meals.

The U.S. Armed Forces annually provide a team of competitively selected officers to serve as mentors and chaperones for the student delegates. A registered nurse, licensed physician and professional security team are in place at all times throughout the week.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION

Two student delegates and a first and second alternate will be designated by the chief school officer from each state, the District of Columbia and overseas military-connected high schools by December 1, 2026.

Applications may be obtained from high school principals and school counselors or directly from the state-level selection administrator or each jurisdiction's department of education website.

Submission deadline dates and processes vary by state but are generally due by late summer/early fall. Specific application materials may be found on most state department of education websites. All state contacts, websites and deadlines are also available on the USSYP website: ussenateyouth.org

The Hearst Foundations will provide application materials, including a rigorous public affairs exam, and \$1,000 to each state-level department of education to assist with the selection expenses for the program.

Military dependents who reside and attend schools in the U.S. should apply for the program according to the RESIDENCY requirements shown below. Applications from students attending overseas military-connected high schools should be submitted to the Education Activities Headquarters for selection of international delegates and alternates.

HOW TO QUALIFY

Qualified high school juniors or seniors must show demonstrated leadership by serving in elected or appointed positions in which they are actively representing a constituency in organizations related to student government, education, public affairs and/or community service.

The primary purposes of the qualifying leadership position must be representation of a constituency and service to others.

Students must be actively serving in qualifying leadership positions, enrolled in high school and living in the state (or for these purposes, the District of Columbia) that they will represent for the entire 2026–2027 academic year.

Selection will be based on the student's outstanding abilities and demonstrated qualities of leadership in an elected or appointed student office for the entire 2026–2027 school year.

Students other than overseas military dependents must be residing in one state of primary residence in the U.S. during the entire 2026–2027 academic year to participate.

1. Any high school junior or senior student is eligible for the program provided they have not previously been a delegate to Washington Week and have not received a USSYP scholarship. The student must hold a high-level leadership position in any one of the following student government, civic or educational organizations during the entire 2026–2027 academic year:
 - a. Student body president, vice president, secretary or treasurer
 - b. Class president, vice president, secretary or treasurer
 - c. Student council representative
 - d. A National Honor Society officer (including discipline-based Honor Societies such as the National English and Social Studies Honor Societies that include service components)
 - e. Student representative elected or appointed (by a panel, commission or board) to a local, state, regional or national-level civic or educational organization approved by the state selection administrator, where the student holds a high-level, year-round leadership position representing a constituency and/or providing service to others
 - f. Commander or squadron leader of a JROTC unit

A student who graduates high school at the close of the fall 2026 semester/quarter is not eligible to apply for the program.

2. **Member or officer positions in academic clubs, educational competition programs/conferences or organizations designed primarily for the student's personal development and enrichment do not qualify a student for the USSYP (although many students who qualify participate in these activities). Positions that DO NOT meet the eligibility criteria include:**

- a. Attendance or officer position at Boys/Girls Nation or State, or Junior State conferences
- b. Member of a National Honor Society (serving as an elected officer for the organization for the entire school year is acceptable)
- c. Member or leader of the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or a sports team
- d. Founder or chairperson of a self-created group
- e. A participant, captain or officer in Mock Trial, Debate Team, Model UN, mock legislature or any other academic club
- f. Any conference or competition where the primary engagement is for individual educational benefit
- g. An internship, job or position that receives payment or a stipend

3. **RESIDENCY: Each student must be a legal permanent resident or citizen of the United States at the time of application.**

Students must be enrolled and attending classes for the entire academic year in a public or independent high school located in the state (or for these purposes, the District of Columbia) in which at least one of their parents or guardians currently resides. Home-educated students must be approved by their state department of education to apply.

Exceptions to the residency requirement will be made only in the following cases:

- a. Military dependents from overseas military-connected schools will represent the state(s) of which the parents/guardians are U.S. legal voting residents. Military dependents attending schools in the U.S. must be residing in the state in which their school is located for the entire academic year.
- b. Students who are assigned to and attending public high school in a bordering state under a legal interstate agreement. Students shall apply through the state where the high school is located and shall represent that state if selected.

PROGRAM RULES

1. All delegates must agree to fully block both arrival and departure travel days to participate in Washington Week.

All travel provided by The Hearst Foundations is round-trip only. Itineraries are built to reduce overall travel time by using most direct routes within these time frames:

D.C. ARRIVAL:

Saturday, March 6, 2027

Between 6:00 AM and 5:00 PM Eastern

D.C. DEPARTURE:

Saturday, March 13, 2027

Between 5:00 AM and 9:00 AM Eastern

2. No individual or outside tours or trips will be permitted while traveling to and from Washington, D.C., or while in Washington, D.C. This policy applies to attendance at any other outside activity, conference, scholarship competition, individual or group athletic activities, college tours and events or appointments in or around the D.C. surrounding area during the USSYP Washington Week program time frame as outlined above.
3. It will be the responsibility of the parents/legal guardians to transport (at their expense) each delegate to the nearest commercial airport or train station that provides round-trip travel to Washington, D.C., from their hometown.
4. The chief school officer from each state and jurisdiction must submit the names of the two delegates and two alternates in writing to The Hearst Foundations by December 1, 2026. Acceptance to the USSYP will be pending final confirmation of student qualifications.
5. **Code of Conduct:** Delegates will be the guests of the United States Senate and The Hearst Foundations throughout the program and are required to conduct themselves with civility, dignity and professionalism. Debate and discussion are actively encouraged in an environment of tolerance, respect and inclusion. Students selected to the program are serving as at-large public representatives of their states, communities and schools and attend the program to learn from the speakers and from one another. Students are prohibited from engaging in lobbying, petitioning, protest or overt political activism during Washington Week. Cyberbullying and bullying of any kind will not be tolerated.
6. The program requires each delegate to submit a statement of participation including a Code of Conduct and Health and Safety agreements to be signed by students and parents/legal guardians. All program rules apply to the group as a whole, defined as minors.
7. No arrangements for individual religious practices or services other than dietary guidelines will be made. This policy will be strictly observed from the time the student delegates arrive at the Washington area airports, train station and program site until they return home.
8. Parents are not allowed to chaperone their child, and delegate roommates are designated by the program.

SCHOLARSHIP

The Hearst Foundations believe it is in the public interest to encourage outstanding young people to continue their educational development. The \$12,500 undergraduate college scholarship award is subject to the conditions and requirements specified below. Additional detailed scholarship information will be provided to the delegates after Washington Week. Certificates representing the award will be presented to the delegates during their visit to Washington, D.C., often personally signed by their Senators.

SCHOLARSHIP RULES

1. **The \$12,500 college scholarship and attendance at the Washington Week program are one inseparable award.** Delegates must participate in the Washington Week program in accordance with all program rules and policies in order to receive the financial scholarship.
2. The USSYP scholarship is designated for undergraduate college study only at an accredited United States college or university. All students are encouraged to include history, political science or related subjects in their undergraduate program.
3. The \$12,500 scholarship is designated for the specified student's education expense and must be used within four years after enrollment. Funds are paid directly to the college or university on the student's behalf. No funds may be given directly to a student or family. The scholarship will be issued in either one payment of \$12,500 or increments of \$6,250 or \$3,125.
4. Students attending military academies (U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Coast Guard) may draw the USSYP scholarship per the guidelines to purchase required military uniforms, books, computer equipment and other educational materials.
5. **Failure to abide by rules and requirements of the program and scholarship will result in dismissal from the program and forfeiture of the \$12,500 scholarship award. A student will automatically forfeit eligibility for the scholarship award for misconduct as a delegate.**

Rules related to the USSYP and scholarship shall be construed, interpreted and applied by The Hearst Foundations, whose action and determination shall be final and binding.

Attendance during the entire Washington Week program is required to receive the financial scholarship; appropriate disposition of scholarship funds will be determined by the program director if a primary delegate is unable to attend the program due to emergency circumstances or is dismissed. The Hearst Foundations must be notified in advance for an alternate delegate to replace a primary delegate unable to participate in Washington Week.



THE WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST FOUNDATION

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UNITED STATES SENATE RESOLUTION 324

In 1962, Senate Resolution 324, submitted by Senator KUCHEL (for himself and Senators MANSFIELD, DIRKSEN, and HUMPHREY), was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration, and, subsequently, unanimously approved by the United States Senate as follows:

WHEREAS the continued vitality of our Republic depends, in part, on the intelligent understanding of our political processes and the functions of our National Government by the citizens of the United States; and

WHEREAS the durability of a constitutional democracy is dependent upon alert, talented, vigorous competition for political leadership; and

WHEREAS individual Senators have cooperated with various private and university undergraduate and graduate

fellowship and internship programs relating to the work of Congress; and

WHEREAS in the high schools of the United States, there exists among students who have been elected to student body offices in their junior or senior year a potential reservoir of young citizens who are experiencing their first responsibilities of service to a constituency and who should be encouraged to deepen their interest in and understanding of their country's political process: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate hereby expresses its willingness to cooperate in a nationwide competitive high school Senate youth program which would give several representative high school students from each State a short indoctrination into the operation of the United States Senate

and the Federal Government generally, if such a program can be satisfactorily arranged and completely supported by private funds with no expense to the Federal Government.

RESOLUTION 146. To amend S. Res. 324 of the Eighty-seventh Congress to provide for the participation of the Department of Defense education system for dependents in overseas areas in the Senate Youth Program.

Resolved, That S. Res. 324, Eighty-seventh Congress, agreed to May 17, 1963, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

Section 3. For the purpose of this resolution, the term "State" includes the Department of Defense education system for dependents in overseas areas.

THE HEARST FOUNDATIONS

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