



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Iowa Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program ***Students Headed to Washington, D. C. and to Receive \$10,000 College Scholarship***

January 16, 2019, Washington, D.C. —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announces that high school students Mr. Kevin Matthew Drahos and Mr. James Meng will join Senator Charles Grassley and Senator Joni K. Ernst in representing Iowa in the nation's capital during the 57th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 2 — 9, 2019. Kevin Drahos of Marion and James Meng of West Des Moines were selected from among the state's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation who will also each receive a \$10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study.

The USSYP was created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 and has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by The Hearst Foundations since inception. Originally proposed by Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey, the impetus for the program as stated in Senate testimony is "to increase young Americans' understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government, learn the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials, and emphasize the vital importance of democratic decision making not only for America but for people around the world."

Each year this extremely competitive merit-based program brings the most outstanding high school students - two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity - to Washington, D.C. for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it. The overall mission of the program is to help instill within each class of USSYP student delegates more profound knowledge of the American political process and a lifelong commitment to public service. In addition to the program week, The Hearst Foundations provide each student with a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs. Transportation and all expenses for Washington Week are also provided by The Hearst Foundations; as stipulated in S.Res.324, no government funds are utilized.

Kevin Drahos, a senior at Linn-Mar High School, currently serves as Senior Class president, and is involved in numerous organizations including the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, Iowa House of Representatives Page program, Key Club, Iowa BIG, and Showchoir. He was recently awarded the Governor's Volunteer award and Youth Leadership Ambassador award. This past summer, Kevin was selected to attend the Conference on National Affairs, and soon after, formally started the nonprofit March For Our Lives Iowa where he serves as Board president. After high school, Kevin will attend college and plans to major in political science.

James Meng, a senior at Valley High School, serves as his school's Student Body treasurer. He is involved in numerous activities in his school and community including Iowa Youth Congress, debate team, National Honor Society, Principal's Advisory Council, World Cultures Club and DECA, an organization for future entrepreneurs in marketing, finance and hospitality. He currently serves as the president of a nonprofit called Blank Tales, which raises awareness about homelessness, and is the lead director of the Iowa Debate Initiative. He works as a Youth Leadership advocate and Outreach intern at Monsoon Asian and Pacific Islanders in Solidarity and works to open social justice conversations in his school and community.

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Chosen as alternates to the 2019 program were Mr. Tyler Juffernbruch, a resident of Indianola, who attends Indianola High School and Mr. Fez Zafar, a resident of Des Moines, who attends Theodore Roosevelt High School.

Delegates and alternates are selected by the state departments of education nationwide and the District of Columbia and Department of Defense Education Activity, after nomination by teachers and principals. The chief state school officer for each jurisdiction confirms the final selection. This year's Iowa delegates and alternates were designated by Mr. Ryan Wise, Director of Education.

While in Washington the student delegates attend meetings and briefings with senators, members of the House of Representatives, Congressional staff, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, an ambassador to the United States and senior members of the national media. The students will also tour many of the national monuments and several museums and they will stay at the historic Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C.

In addition to outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to volunteer work, the student delegates rank academically in the top one percent of their states among high school juniors and seniors. Now more than 5,700 strong, alumni of the program continue to excel and develop impressive qualities that are often directed toward public service. Among the many distinguished alumni are: Senator Susan Collins, the first alumna to be elected U.S. senator; Senator Cory Gardner, the second alumna to be elected U.S. senator and the first to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the first alumna to be elected governor; former Chief Judge Robert Henry, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit; former Ambassador to West Germany Richard Burt, and former presidential advisors Thomas "Mack" McLarty and Karl Rove. Additional notables include former Lt. Governor of Idaho David Leroy, Provost of Wake Forest University Rogan Kersh, military officers, members of state legislatures, Foreign Service officers, top congressional staff, healthcare providers and other university educators.

Members of the bipartisan U. S. Senate Youth Program 2019 Senate Advisory Committee: Senator Joni K. Ernst of Iowa, Republican Co-Chair; Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Democratic Co-Chair; Advisory Members: Susan M. Collins (R-ME), Steve Daines (R-MT), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), John Kennedy (R-LA), Michael F. Bennet (D-CO), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). Each year, the Honorary Co-Chairs of the program are the vice president of the United States and the Senate majority and minority leaders.

For more information please visit: www.ussenateyouth.org
