



62nd Annual
UNITED STATES SENATE
★ YOUTH PROGRAM ★
EDUCATION • LEADERSHIP • PUBLIC SERVICE • RESPECT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Questions about your state's delegates, alternates or state selection process:
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Oklahoma Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program
Students Headed to Washington, D. C. and to Receive \$10,000 Scholarship

January 09, 2024, Washington, D.C. —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announces that high school students Ms. Ella Renee Calvert and Ms. Victoria Chikaodi Nwankwo will join Senator James Lankford and Senator Markwayne Mullin in representing Oklahoma during the 62nd annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 2 — 9, 2024. Ella Calvert of Stillwater and Victoria Nwankwo of Oklahoma City were selected from among the state's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation. Each delegate will also 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 Senate leadership of the day, 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 provides the most outstanding high school students - two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity - with 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. All expenses for Washington Week are also provided by The Hearst Foundations; as stipulated in Senate Resolution 324, no government funds are utilized.

Ella Calvert, a senior at Stillwater High School, serves as the president of the Student Council. She is enrolled in the pre-engineering technology program at Meridian Technology Center, works at Chick-Fil-A and is involved in her church's youth group. She is a National Merit semifinalist, was a page for the Oklahoma State House of Representatives and attended Oklahoma Girls State. She is a leader in the Stillwater Wagon Crew, a member of the National Honor Society, National Technical Honor Society, SkillsUSA and Beta Club. Ella volunteers at Our Daily Bread Food Bank and intends to intern there for the spring semester. Her hobbies include dance, calligraphy, graphic design and reading about current events. She plans to major in economics and political science, would like to work on Title IX issues as a lawyer, and possibly run for an elected office.

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Victoria Nwankwo, a senior at Putnam City North High School, serves as the president of the National Honor Society. She concurrently attends the Francis Tuttle Biosciences and Medicine Academy as a third-year student. She serves as vice president of the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), captain of the academic team, and recently qualified for the state National Speech and Debate Association. Acknowledging the needs of families in her hometown, Victoria has organized multiple drives at her school, including food drives and clothing drives to serve her community. Outside of school, she is a peer advisor for the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation Teens in Philanthropy, peer advisor for the Bethany Children's Health Center Teen Leadership Board, the State Central Region vice president of Oklahoma HOSA, and served as the 2022-2023 Ward 8 council member on the Youth Council of Oklahoma City. Victoria also had the opportunity to attend the 2023 Oklahoma Girls State where she was elected as lieutenant governor and was selected to be a Girls Nation senator. Her honors include being a 2023 National Institutes of Health Research fellow, Next Gen 30 Under 30, Youth Leadership Oklahoma Class of XXII, George Nigh Scholarship winner, National Technical Honor Society, HOSA Silver Barbra James Service Medal and the Gold President's Volunteer Service Award. Victoria plans to study biomedical engineering and pursue a medical degree, and later go into public policy focusing on healthcare and medical device sustainability.

Chosen as alternates to the 2024 program were Ms. Nandini Hiren Patel, a resident of Oklahoma City, who attends Westmoore High School and Mr. Seojoon Alex Kim, a resident of Stillwater, who attends Stillwater 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 Oklahoma delegates and alternates were designated by Mr. Ryan Walters, State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

During the program week, the student delegates will attend meetings and briefings with senators, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, and leaders of cabinet agencies, among others.

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 6,100 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; Secretary of Transportation and former Mayor of South Bend Indiana, Pete Buttigieg, the first alumna to be appointed as a cabinet secretary; former 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, former 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 U. S. Senate Youth Program 2024 annual Senate Advisory Committee are: Senator Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, the 2024 USSYP Democratic Co-Chair and Senator John Barrasso, M.D. of Wyoming, the 2024 USSYP Republican Co-Chair. The full USSYP Senate Advisory Committee consists of the vice president of the United States and the Senate majority and minority leaders who annually serve as the program's Honorary Co-Chairs; two senators, one from each party, serving as acting Co-Chairs who each have keynote speaking roles, and an eight-member bipartisan Senate panel, four senators from each party, who lend their names in support. Serving on the Advisory Committee for the upcoming program are: Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, Senator Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire, Senator Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts, Senator Alex Padilla of California, Senator John Boozman of Arkansas, Senator Katie Britt of Alabama, Senator John Hoeven of North Dakota and Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

For more information please visit: www.ussenateyouth.org

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