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

January 10, 2023, Washington, D.C. —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announces that high school students Ms. Anusha Nadkarni and Mr. Maisam Rajaie will join Senator Richard J. Durbin and Senator Tammy Duckworth in representing Illinois during the 61st annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 4 — 11, 2023. Anusha Nadkarni of Bloomington and undefined undefined of undefined 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 S.Res.324, no government funds are utilized.

Anusha Nadkarni, a senior at Bloomington High School, serves as the National Honor Society (NHS) president, where she focussed her efforts on building relationships within the school district following a period of political polarization and physical isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Working with elementary-aged students, the NHS hopes to provide strong ties to secondary education and instill the critical importance of service early on. Anusha is also passionate about educational equity and cultural responsiveness. As chair of Diversify Our Narrative's National Curriculum Council, she develops pedagogical tools and lesson plans that promote equitable classroom spaces. Anusha is trained in restorative practices and values its role in empowering students and repairing harm. She has introduced a student-led restorative outreach program to her high school through her position as chair of the Promise Council, and will be speaking at the International Institute of Restorative Practice's World Conference in 2023.

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Maisam Rajaie, a senior at Mather High School, serves as a local School Council representative. He believes that a republic protects the lives of its citizens and values their ambition and contributions. Throughout the journey from running for School Council student representative, he has worked with the administration to implement policies that ensure that a student can feel safe at school, and has involved students in the everyday policymaking and behavioral references. As an athlete and student representative, Maisam knows the importance of after-school activities and has started working on a campaign that brings school and community together. In the times where politics may need youth participation the most, he has continuously encouraged and helped his peers to take action and advocate for their communities.

Chosen as alternates to the 2023 program were Ms. Megha Khemka, a resident of Chicago, who attends Walter Payton College Preparatory High School and Ms. Imani Desire Wade, a resident of Mascoutah, who attends Mascoutah 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 Illinois delegates and alternates were designated by Carmen I. Ayala, State Superintendent of Education.

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 6,000 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, 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 U. S. Senate Youth Program 2023 annual Senate Advisory Committee are: Senator John Hickenlooper of Colorado, the 2023 USSYP Democratic Co-Chair and Senator Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, the 2023 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 Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey, Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, Senator Jon Tester of Montana, Senator Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, Senator Bill Cassidy, MD, of Louisiana, Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Senator Cynthia M. Lummis of Wyoming.

For more information please visit: www.ussenateyouth.org
