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Contact: Questions about your state's delegates, alternates or state selection process:
Ms. Katrina L. Cunningham at kacunnin@isbe.net.

For general information about the United States Senate Youth Program:
Program Director Ms. Rayne Guilford (800) 425-3632 or rguilford@hearstfdn.org.

Illinois 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. Anoushka Lal and Ms. Chelsea Akwaah Osei will join Senator Richard J. Durbin and Senator Tammy Duckworth in representing Illinois during the 62nd annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 2 — 9, 2024. Anoushka Lal of Chicago and Chelsea Osei of Crest Hill 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.

Anoushka Lal, a senior at Walter Payton College Preparatory High School, serves as the president of Student Government, fostering empathy and collaboration among 28 representatives to serve her school's 1,226 students. As a Student Government representative for over eight years, she has spearheaded diversity-equity-inclusion initiatives, amplifying voices not often heard. She previously served as the Public Health chair of the Chicago mayor's Youth Commission at City Hall, working with two mayoral administrations to address the pressing needs of city youth, including mental health and resource consolidation for over 340,000 public high school students. She has worked with the Chicago Department of Public Health to promote a youth behavioral task force during the COVID pandemic. Anoushka is currently the chair of the Illinois High School Democrats, mobilizing young Illinoisans to engage in local elections and progressive causes such as gun reform. She is a Civil Rights Scholar at the Chicago Public School District, and has a passion for writing socio-political op-eds in magazines to represent the voices of her generation. Interested in public policy and government, she aims to drive inclusive civic culture after graduating from high school.

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Chelsea Osei, a first-generation, Ghanaian American senior at Lockport Township High School, serves as a member of the LTHS District 205 Board of Education that represents over 4,000 students and community members. She is a founder of the mentorship club Advanced Placement Advisory Board, which helps to allocate AP resources for students, and a board member of the Student Equity Action Committee that works to highlight cultures and implement DEI techniques in curriculum and teaching. In addition, through her fellowship at Citizens University's Youth Collaboratory, she created GenerationAMP, a safe, online platform for young artists to discuss their identity and community. Chelsea has served as a Citizenship Class instructor for immigrants hoping to obtain their citizenship at Southwest Suburban Immigrant Project, and as a Guide for young activists at Civics Unplugged. She received a Lockport Women's Club scholarship to participate in the Prairie State Speech Summer Camp and received the Lockport District 205 Dominican Republic trip scholarship taking place this spring. After high school, she plans to enter the pre-law track in hopes of becoming an attorney to give justice to the underserved.

Chosen as alternates to the 2024 program were Ms. Abby Marie Ehrler, a resident of Galena, who attends Galena High School and Ms. Shreya Nallamothe, a resident of Normal, who attends University 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 Dr. Tony Sanders, 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 6,100 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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