



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program
Students to Participate in Online Program and to Receive \$10,000 Scholarship

January 11, 2022, Washington, D.C. —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announces that high school students Mr. Ross William Bodine and Ms. Esees Kaur Komal will join Senator Richard J. Durbin and Senator Tammy Duckworth in representing Illinois during the 60th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 6 — 9, 2022. Ross Bodine of Sherman and Esees Komal of Schaumburg were selected from among the state's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation who will each also receive a \$10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the 2022 program will be held online, through a comprehensive and highly interactive virtual education and leadership forum.

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.

Ross Bodine, a senior at Williamsville High School, serves as the president of the Senior Class. He has been a member of the National Honor Society for three years and was elected to serve as president of the chapter. He has completed over sixty hours of community service, including assisting with the Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach and volunteering at St. John Vianney Catholic Church. As National Honor Society chapter president, Ross is responsible for finding new ways to provide service to his community. He has been involved with Illinois Youth and Government, which teaches high school students about the importance of government and allows participation in a model state government that mirrors the Illinois General Assembly. Through this program, Ross served as a legislative assistant, representative and even ran for governor. Lastly, he was a member of the Student Steering Committee for Youth and Government, which is a statewide board that finds ways to improve the program. Ross' future plans are to attend a four-year university majoring in plant biotechnology.

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Esees Kaur Komal, a junior at Schaumburg High School, serves as an appointed representative to the Student Body. Her involvement in policy began in the eighth grade when she worked with Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi and the Humane Society to ban puppy mill animal sales in Illinois, a bill which recently passed. She has spoken at the Parliament of World Religions, the Fridays For Future climate strike, hosted workshops on the Indian farmers' protest, and has interned with her congressman and state representative. Esees is also an appointed member of the Cabinet for the Junior State of America where she inspires students to recognize their power as members of a democracy. Her future plans include majoring in political science and attending law school.

Chosen as alternates to the 2022 program were Ms. Elaan Bader, a resident of Litchfield, who attends Litchfield High School and Ms. Ainsley Olivia Barrett, a resident of Orland Park, who attends Carl Sandburg 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 online meetings and briefings with senators, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, 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; 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 2022 annual Senate Advisory Committee are: Senator Christopher A. Coons of Delaware, Democratic Co-Chair; Senator Susan M. Collins of Maine, Republican Co-Chair; Advisory Members: Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM); Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley (D-OR); Senator Tina Smith (D-MN); Senator Mark R. Warner (D-VA); Senator Mike Braun (R-IN); Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV); Senator James M. Inhofe (R-OK); and Senator M. Michael Rounds (R-SD). 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
