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Utah 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 Mr. Noah Dupont Canada and Ms. Diya Oommen will join Senator Mike Lee and Senator Mitt Romney in representing Utah during the 62nd annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 2 — 9, 2024. Noah Canada of Park City and Diya Oommen of Salt Lake 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.

Noah Canada, a senior at Park City High School, serves as the president of the National Honor Society, where he has planned food drives collecting over 90,000 pounds of food for his community. He is also the captain of the debate team, where he competes and coaches students in Lincoln-Douglas debate. In that role, he has created debate resources and distributed them to small public schools around the U.S. Additionally, Noah was the 2022 YMCA Utah youth advocate and is the 2023 YMCA Utah youth governor, which has empowered him to work with YMCA leadership to design a legislative agenda and meet with members of Congress to lobby for civic education, early education, and healthy living programs. In 2022, he completed a report analyzing the environmental impact of the Park City Chamber of Commerce, allowing them to reduce their carbon footprint and lead by example in their mission of cultivating sustainable tourism. As co-president of the Future Business Leaders of America club, he teaches financial literacy and investing concepts to other students. Noah also enjoys volunteering with the Park City Education Foundation, Christian Center of Park City, and Summit Community Gardens. He hopes to dual major in political science and neuroscience in college, attend law school, and become a United States senator.

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Diya Oommen, a senior at West High School, serves as the District 7 representative to the Utah State Board of Education, where she advocates for youth civic engagement, proposes policy changes, and helps allocate funding for equitable education policies. She is also passionately involved in the ongoing discourse about the teaching of history and ensuring the representation of marginalized voices. She is involved with We The Future, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering youth and expanding voter pre-registration in Utah high schools. Her work with the Salt Lake City mayor's office on the Racial Equity in Policing Commission, as the sole high-school-aged commissioner, allows her to help ensure the safety and success of both students and officers. Diya's commitment to inclusive leadership and strategic problem solving is evident in her ability to bring forth the perspectives of underrepresented voices in various community projects. Her work has been recognized by the Human Rights Commission of Salt Lake City, which honored her with their Emerging Youth Leader award. She plans on attending a full-time university in the fall and continuing to advance on her journey of compassionate advocacy.

Chosen as alternates to the 2024 program were Mr. Cash Mendenhall, a resident of Salt Lake City, who attends West High School and Mr. Jamison Ellis, a resident of Wellsville, who attends Mountain Crest 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 Utah delegates and alternates were designated by Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D., 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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