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Utah 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 Ms. Arundhati Bonney Oommen and Ms. Neve Skye Rauscher will join Senator Mike Lee and Senator Mitt Romney in representing Utah during the 60th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 6 — 9, 2022. Arundhati Oommen of Salt Lake City and Neve Rauscher, also of Salt Lake City, 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.

Arundhati Oommen, a senior at West High School, serves as the District 7 Student Advisory Council representative to the Utah State Board of Education. She is a former student board member for the Salt Lake City school district, holds a passion for youth involvement and youth engagement and works to bring young voices to the table. She brought House Bill 338 to the Utah Legislature which would create a student voter pilot project for local school board elections. She is a student representative on the HCR015 Civics Taskforce and has worked with the Salt Lake City mayor's office on representative youth programs and with the Racial Equity in Policing Commission to ensure the safety and success of both students and officers. Arundhati plans on attending a full-time university in the fall to pursue a career in public service.

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Neve Rauscher, a senior at Waterford School, serves as the vice president of the Student Body. Additionally she serves as the Debate team captain, competing in Public Forum Debate, and participates in Ethics Bowl, which focuses on in-depth discussions of topical ethical dilemmas. As a captain for both teams she organizes practices, mock ethics or debate rounds, and tournaments. As the Student Body president of Community Service this year, she has focused on working to create events to uplift the surrounding community. With an influx of refugees entering the state and country from Afghanistan, Neve organized a project to raise money by picking and selling pumpkins this October to donate to the Utah Refugee Coalition and to help set up and fund an apartment downtown for a refugee family. Growing up with the Wasatch Mountain Range in her backyard has helped her gain outdoor leadership skills through touring in the backcountry and taking avalanche training courses. She is interested in majoring in political science and medicine in college and then moving into either public office or public health fields. Neve is passionate about taking action on climate change and addressing topics regarding race issues and gender pay disparity in Utah and nationally.

Chosen as alternates to the 2022 program were Mr. Kurt McLaughlin, a resident of Salt Lake City, who attends Judge Memorial Catholic High School and Ms. Alicia Du, also a resident of Salt Lake City, who attends West 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, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

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
