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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 13, 2025, Washington, D.C. —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) is pleased to announce that high school students Ms. Ainge Leah NaTahsha Ford and Ms. Aaboli Samant will join Senator Mike Lee and Senator John Curtis in representing Utah during the 63rd annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 1 — 8, 2025. Ainge Leah Ford of Salem and Aaboli Samant of West Valley City were selected from among the state's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation that will attend meetings and briefings with senators, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, and other officials throughout the week. Each delegate will also receive a \$10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study.

The USSYP was founded in 1962 by the sons of William Randolph Hearst and the senate leadership of the day -- Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey -- in response to the deep divisiveness and national anxiety following the McCarthy era. They outlined a plan to encourage America's most talented young people to consider public service as an important, life-long, and noble pursuit, sponsoring Senate Resolution 324, which passed unanimously. As stated in founding testimony, the program strives "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 two outstanding high school students 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. Each student will also receive a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs. The Hearst Foundations have fully funded the program since inception; as stipulated, no government funds are utilized. ([United State Senate Resolution 324](#))

Ainge Leah Ford, a senior at Salem Hills High School, serves as an officer on the Senior Class Student Council. She has held leadership positions in DECA, an organization focused on business and entrepreneurship, has been president of the Future Business Leaders of America, president of the National Honor Society, and has served three years on the Salem Youth Council. She has actively participated in debate, Girls State, the Freedom Academy and the Close Up Foundation. Her business accomplishments have earned her the Business and Marketing Sterling Scholar award. Ainge Leah plans to receive a master's degree in business finance, with a minor in political science. After college, her dream is to be an entrepreneur and manage a successful company and eventually run for the United States Senate.

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Aaboli Samant, a senior at Utah Virtual Academy, serves as president of the Student Body. She is the president of her school's chapter of Future Business Leaders of America, is a member of National Honor Society (NHS), and has served as class president in the 9th and 10th grades. She participates in several community service activities, such as volunteer tutoring for the past two and a half years through an organization called Learn To Be. She has also been volunteering for three years at ENGIN, where she helps Ukrainian teenagers improve their conversational English. Aaboli is an active peer tutor under the leadership of her NHS chapter. She plans to major in biochemistry, and eventually get a doctorate.

Chosen as alternates to the 2025 program were Ms. Amira J. Bell, a resident of Hill Air Force Base, who attends Farmington High School and Ms. MeiLi Han, a resident of Park City, who attends Park City 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.

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 6,200 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; Representative Sarah McBride, the second alumna to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; 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, and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the first alumna to be elected governor.

Members of the U. S. Senate Youth Program 2025 annual Senate Advisory Committee are: Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina, the 2025 USSYP Republican Co-Chair and Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, the 2025 USSYP Democratic Co-Chair. The full USSYP Senate Advisory Committee includes the vice president of the United States and the Senate majority and minority leaders, and four senators from each party who lend their names in support. Serving on the 2025 Advisory Committee: Senator Susan M. Collins of Maine, Senator John Cornyn of Texas, Senator Jerry Moran of Kansas, Senator Pete Ricketts of Nebraska, Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, Senator Tina Smith of Minnesota and Senator Peter Welch of Vermont.

For more information please visit: www.ussenateyouth.org

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