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Connecticut 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. Yasmeen Magdy Galal and Ms. Snigtha Mohanraj will join Senator Richard Blumenthal and Senator Christopher Murphy in representing Connecticut during the 62nd annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 2 — 9, 2024. Yasmeen Galal of Prospect and Snigtha Mohanraj of Ansonia 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.

Yasmeen Galal, a senior at Woodland Regional High School, serves as a student representative for the Connecticut state Board of Education, where she uses her voice to represent over 500,000 students. She holds significant leadership roles, ranging from serving as the president of the Connecticut Association of Student Councils, where she facilitates opportunities for others to become better leaders, to a student representative of the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education. One of her most impactful leadership roles is with the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation (RECF), where she serves as one of twelve students on the Student Advisory Board. In this role, she provides guidance to the CEO and contributes to shaping policies that impact thousands of students. Additionally, within her school, Yasmeen serves as Student Body vice president, math team captain and tennis team captain. Her commitment to public service extends further, from serving as a board member of the State Student Advisory Council on Education to giving back at the Islamic American Society for Connecticut. Driven by her passion for technology and a desire to contribute to her community, she envisions a future centered around policymaking in the field of technology, with a focus on ensuring its accessibility to everyone. She plans to major in political science and computer science in college.

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Snigtha Mohanraj, a junior at the Engineering and Science University Magnet School, serves as a representative and treasurer in her Class Cabinet, where she works on bringing more funding to additional STEM opportunities in school and advocating for a more open school dress code. She has been an intern at the Climate Health Education Project since 2021, and volunteers with the New Haven Climate Movement where she aims to bring climate education within schools and promote climate action in her community. She serves as a water quality advocate with EarthEcho International, working for protection of local water bodies. She also co-founded the nonprofit YouthSTEM organization to help bring quality STEM education to all schools, especially those in underprivileged communities. Snigtha is part of her school varsity debate team and Model UN high school program offered through Yale University, competing at international levels. She will also be interning in the Social Justice Readers Fellowship to work on educational equality in Connecticut. She is most interested in the intersectionality between environmental science and politics. With a strong background in STEM, presenting her research at various conferences, she hopes to expand her knowledge by learning more about the policy aspects of such work. Snigtha plans to major in environmental science to become an environmental policy analyst, advocating for more attention to STEM in government and developing environmentally-friendly legislation.

Chosen as alternates to the 2024 program were Mr. Samuel Sung-min Bae, a resident of Orange, who attends Amity Regional High School and Ms. Sreenidi Bala, a resident of Farmington, who attends Farmington 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 Connecticut delegates and alternates were designated by Ms. Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner 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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