



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Questions about your state's delegates, alternates or state selection process:  
Ms. Roz Clarke Thompson at Roz@awsp.org or (360) 357-7951.

For general information about the United States Senate Youth Program:  
Program Director Ms. Rayne Guilford at rguilford@hearstfdn.org or (800) 425-3632.

### **Washington Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program** ***Students Headed to Washington, D. C. and to Receive \$10,000 College Scholarship***

**January 16, 2019, Washington, D.C.** —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announces that high school students Ms. Zaira Bardos and Ms. Lexi J. Rodriguez-Padilla will join Senator Patty Murray and Senator Maria Cantwell in representing Washington in the nation's capital during the 57<sup>th</sup> annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 2 — 9, 2019. Zaira Bardos of Orting and Lexi Rodriguez-Padilla of Sedro Woolley were selected from among the state's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation who will also each 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 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 brings the most outstanding high school students - two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity - to Washington, D.C. for 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. Transportation and all expenses for Washington Week are also provided by The Hearst Foundations; as stipulated in S.Res.324, no government funds are utilized.

Zaira Bardos, a junior at Orting High School, serves as vice president of the Junior Class. Her involvement in school includes leadership roles as well as participation in drama, choir, National Honor Society, ASPIRE and Film Club at Pierce College. Zaira intends to complete a degree in English and eventually become a civil rights attorney. She is passionate about creating an organization to help educate women in third world countries and wants to use her creative talents to tell stories through film.

Lexi Rodriguez-Padilla, a senior at Sedro-Woolley High School, serves as the School Board representative for the Associated Student Body. She has volunteered over 1,000 hours with Girl Scouts, and is active in soccer, tennis, Varsity in Volunteerism, Future Business Leaders of America, Family Career, and Community Leaders of America, National Honor Society, and the We Inspire Safe Habits organization. Lexi helped reinstate the Latinos Unidos Club at her school and plans to attend a four year university to major in biochemical engineering. She then hopes to attend medical school and will continue working for unity and representation for the LatinX population.

(more)

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Chosen as alternates to the 2019 program were Mr. Joe Hofman, a resident of Everett, who attends Cascade High School and Ms. Fatima Al-Shamary, a resident of Renton, who attends Hazen 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 Washington delegates and alternates were designated by Mr. Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

While in Washington the student delegates attend meetings and briefings with senators, members of the House of Representatives, Congressional staff, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, an ambassador to the United States and senior members of the national media. The students will also tour many of the national monuments and several museums and they will stay at the historic Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C.

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 5,700 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; 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, 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 bipartisan U. S. Senate Youth Program 2019 Senate Advisory Committee: Senator Joni K. Ernst of Iowa, Republican Co-Chair; Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Democratic Co-Chair; Advisory Members: Susan M. Collins (R-ME), Steve Daines (R-MT), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), John Kennedy (R-LA), Michael F. Bennet (D-CO), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). 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](http://www.ussenateyouth.org)**

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