



NEWS RELEASE

For more information contact Betty VanDeventer 402.471.4537 or betty.vandeventer@nebraska.gov

Jan. 15, 2015

News release provided by U.S. Senate Youth Program

Nebraska Contact: Harris Payne at harris.payne@nebraska.gov or (402) 471-2449

U.S. Senate Youth Program Contact: Rayne Guilford at 800-425-3632 or rguilford@hearstfdn.org

See www.ussenateyouth.org

NEBRASKA STUDENTS SELECTED FOR U.S. SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

-- Elsa Knight of Clay Center and Kristen Tomjack of Wahoo are invited to Washington, D. C. and will each receive a \$5,000 scholarship.

Jan. 8, 2015, Washington, D.C. -- Senators Deb Fischer and Ben Sasse today announced the names of the two students who have been selected as delegates to the 53rd annual United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) that will be held March 7 – 14, 2015 in Washington, D.C.

Elsa Knight of Clay Center and Kristen Tomjack of Wahoo were chosen from across the state to be part of the group of 104 student delegates who will attend the program's 53rd annual Washington Week.

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 104 of 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 \$5,000 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.

Elsa Knight attends Harvard High School and serves as a Student Council representative and vice president of her school's Drug Free Youth chapter. She is involved in a variety of school activities, including Speech, Show Choir, One-Act, Power Drive, Quiz Bowl, Spanish Club, Future Business Leaders of America, Science Olympiad and Peer to Peer. She mentors younger students, acting as a student director for two junior show choirs at her school. After high school, Elsa plans to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to study history and law.

Kristen Tomjack attends Wahoo High School and serves as her class president. She is also the president of her Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) chapter and is vice president of the Student Council. Kristen is involved in varsity golf and cheerleading, National Honor Society, and is a Junior Mates mentor. She plans on attending college and double majoring in international relations and political science.

Chosen as alternates to the 2015 program were Calvin Wineland, a resident of Cambridge, who attends Cambridge High School and Elijah Kennedy, a resident of Brownville, who attends Auburn High School. The chief educational officer in each state selects the delegates after nomination by teachers and principals. This year's delegates were designated by Matthew Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education.

While in Washington the student delegates attend meetings and briefings with Senators, House Representatives and 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 generally rank academically in the top one percent of their states among high school juniors and seniors. Now more than 5,000 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; Senator Cory Gardner, the second alumnus to be elected U.S. Senator and the first to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the first alumnus 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 president of the Progressive Policy Institute Robert Shapiro, military officers, members of state legislatures, Foreign Service officers, top congressional staff, healthcare providers and university educators.

Members of the USSYP 2015 53rd annual Senate Advisory Committee are:
Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia, Republican Co-Chair; Senator Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, Democratic Co-Chair; Senate Advisory Members: Senators Ron Johnson (R-WI), Mike Lee (R-UT), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patrick J. Toomey (R-PA), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Angus King (I-ME). Each year, the Honorary Co-Chairs of the program are the Vice President of the United States and the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders.
