

DECEMBER 2025

UNITED STATES SENATE
YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



POST OFFICE BOX 1798 | WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-1798

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OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

John Selmon Blakley, Sr. (MI 1976)
Wendy Jo Peterson (WA 1978)
Michael S. Sundermeyer (MO 1969)

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Jonathan Lee Morton (AL 1990)	Robert R. Middleton (DC 1966)
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Kirby Lee (IN 1993)	Christopher Trott (FL 1999)
Michael S. Sundermeyer (MO 1969)	John Selmon Blakley, Sr. (MI 1976)
Michael Buckley (MA 1985)	James T. Molloy
Dan Brown (MS 1987)	Gladys S. Hundley



PRESIDENTS

OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

1999–2004

John Selmon Blakley, Sr. (MI 1976)

2004–2006

Robert R. Middleton (DC 1966)

2006–2008

Randy L. Brantley (NC 1981)

2008–2010

Norman L. Fortenberry (LA 1979)

2010–2012

David F. Zavadsky (WI 1990)

2012–2014

Rachel M. Lowe (OR 2000)

2014–2016

Chad Robinson (DE 2001)

2016–2018

Michael Gonzales (NM 1973)

2018–2020

Andrew Bradley (IN 1996)

2020–2022

Gil Valadez (DE 1997)

2022–2024

Amanda Patarino (CO 2012)

2024–2026

Taylor Oster (ND 2012)



★ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ★

TAYLOR OSTER (ND 2012), USSYAA PRESIDENT



Dear United States Senate Youth alumni and friends,

I hope this message finds you and yours well. On behalf of the USSYAA Board of Directors, I wish you a happy holiday season and best wishes for a joyful and prosperous 2026.

2025 was another busy year for USSYAA, marked by an expansion and deepening of USSYAA's engagement with our members. We launched several new programs and events, including the USSYAA Summer Internship Stipend Program, and expanded our event offerings.

In March, we hosted our Annual Alumni Weekend, joined by more than 150 USSYAA members and their guests. Across a three-day weekend, we reconnected with old friends and made new ones, welcomed the 2025 delegates to Washington Week and the alumni community, shared updates about the past and future work of the Association, highlighted the impact of our scholarship program (and the generous donors who made those scholarships possible), and officially conferred the 2025 scholarships on three members. A big thank you to

President-Elect **Ryan Gavin (ME 2009)** and Vice President **Erica Wozniak (MI 2009)** for all their hard work to make our 2025 Annual Alumni Weekend a reality!

This summer, we hosted a series of happy hours throughout D.C. for area members as well as those in the area for internships. These events provided an excellent opportunity for newcomers to the area (whether temporarily or permanently) to meet and connect with fellow members. A big thank you to our National Capital Region Directors **Ranen Miao (NJ 2019)** and **Allison Reinhardt (MT 2017)** for organizing these events!

Our Eastern Region Directors, **Johnson Elugbadebo (IL 1998)** and **Giuseppe Di Cera (MO 2020)**, also hosted an incredible networking event at the Hearst Tower in NYC. Fifty members, many of whom had never joined us for a USSYAA event before, reconnected with old friends, forged new connections, learned about the Association, and enjoyed a sunset view of the NYC cityscape. A big thank you to our regional directors and the Hearst Foundations for making this event possible!

In August, we held our first-ever USSYAA 101, a virtual information and welcome session for all our members. The session provided an overview of USSYAA, offering members the opportunity to learn more about its history, programs, events, and how to get connected and stay involved. Kudos to Liaison Officer **Steven Stacey (AZ 2003)** for his leadership and vision in making this (and future USSYAA 101 sessions) a reality!

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This fall, we also launched our Campus Leaders Program, an initiative designed to foster alumni connections on college campuses across the United States. Campus Leaders serve as the primary point of contact for USSYAA on their campus and host events for alumni. If you're interested in serving as a Campus Leader, please contact **Ranen Miao (NJ 2019)** for more details.

This year, in keeping with our mission to provide financial assistance for the professional education needs of our alumni, we awarded scholarships to three incredible alumni: **Paige Wergin (NE 2016)** received the \$5,000 Rosalie Wynn Hearst Scholarship, and **Serene Singh (CO 2015)** and **Greer Sullivan (NV 2015)** each received a \$2,500 Chandini M. Bachman Scholarship. If you are interested in applying for a 2026 scholarship or participating in the scholarship committee, please visit our website for more details or contact our Alumni Programs Director, **Vicki Cundiff (CO 1973)**.

New this year, we launched the USSYAA Summer Internship Stipend Program for current undergraduate alumni who secure unpaid or low-paying public service internships. The goal is to provide support that eases the financial burden for those pursuing these internships and makes meaningful public service opportunities more accessible. For those undergraduate alumni interested in applying for a stipend, look out for the application in early 2026. If you're interested in contributing to this effort, either by joining the stipend committee or, critically, contributing to the stipend fund, please visit our website for more details or reach out to **Steven Stacey (AZ 2003)**.

Of course, these scholarships, stipends, events, and other association activities would not be possible without the measured stewardship of our Finance Committee and, even more importantly, the generous donations of our alumni. To all the alumni who've donated to the USSYAA this year, especially those who have set up recurring donations, thank you! If you would like to set up a one-time or recurring donation, please visit our website for more information or contact our Treasurer, **David Zavadsky (WI 1990)**.

Looking ahead to the new year, we are in full swing planning for our 2026 Annual Alumni Weekend in Washington, D.C., March 6-8, 2026. We'll be announcing more details, including our award recipients and several new events planned throughout the weekend, in the coming weeks and months, so stay tuned. We hope you can join us in D.C. next March!

Finally, I'd like to end by extending a special thank you to everyone who contributed to the USSYAA this past year – whether that was through service on the Board of Directors, donating to the Association, participating in our mentorship platform, attending an in-person or virtual event, or staying engaged and connected via our website, emails, and social media. On a personal note, I'd also like to thank you all for your trust and partnership over my two years as your President. It's been a true honor – one for which I'm deeply grateful – and I'm incredibly proud of all that we've accomplished together these past two years.

USSYAA exists, achieves its missions, and thrives because of all we've done – individually and collectively – this and every year since our founding in 1999. I'm excited to see all that we can accomplish in 2026 and beyond.

In service and with gratitude,



Taylor Oster (ND 2012)
USSYAA President



TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

CHARLIE MEGGINSON (DE 2016)

The USSYAA digital community reached new heights in 2025, with growing numbers of alumni establishing their presence on our website and utilizing its expanding suite of tools.

[USSYAA.org](https://ussyaa.org) continues to serve as your connection point to thousands of fellow alumni through our member directory, mentorship platform, and career-focused jobs board. Whether you're seeking professional advice, exploring new opportunities, or simply reconnecting with old friends, these resources are here to support you.

Take a moment to visit [USSYAA.org](https://ussyaa.org) – create or refresh your profile, browse available opportunities, and discover the many ways to engage with our thriving alumni network.



TREASURER'S REPORT

DAVID ZAVADSKY (WI 1990)

USSYAA operates on a cash basis and for the one-year period of December 1, 2024, through November 30, 2025, expenses were \$39,548.53 and consist of scholarships, our annual dinner in Washington, regional events including the New York gathering at the Hearst Tower, communications costs, and various operating and administrative costs.

The investment portfolio of the USSYAA is held at Fidelity Investments, and consists of mutual funds, exchange-traded funds, and common stocks. Between December 1, 2024, and November 30, 2025, the investment portfolio increased by 4.2%. Throughout the course of the year, we have made adjustments to our holdings to generate additional cash, and to avoid exposure to some of the wilder fluctuations in the market.

Tax returns are available online at <https://ussyaa.org/bylaws-tax-info/>.



★ 2025 USSYAA ★ SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Supporting the next generation of public servants through graduate education remains a cornerstone of the Alumni Association's mission. Our scholarship program enables USSYP alumni to pursue advanced studies that will strengthen their capacity to serve their communities and our nation. We are proud to announce this year's scholarship recipients:

The Rosalie Wynn and George Randolph Hearst, Sr. Alumni Scholarship in the amount of \$5,000 to **Paige Wergin (NE 2016)**; and Alumni Scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 each to **Greer Sullivan (NV 2015)** and **Serene Singh (CO 2015)**.

The quality and depth of this year's applicant pool was truly exceptional. The impressive caliber of candidates far exceeded the number of scholarships we could award, underscoring the need to expand this program. We encourage all alumni to consider contributing to the Association's scholarship fund. Our community is filled with remarkable individuals charting innovative paths in public service – paths that often require significant financial investment. Your support can make these journeys possible.

We're honored to introduce you to this year's exceptional scholarship recipients.



2025 ROSALIE WYNN HEARST \$5,000 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

PAIGE WERGIN (NE 2016)

The Rosalie Wynn Hearst Scholarship will go toward my coursework for my dual degree master's program in Public Administration and Social Work at the University of Nebraska Omaha. With the combination of these degrees, I will continue to expand my capabilities to serve the public with competency and research-based practice that the social work field is based in.

The biopsychosocial model that social workers use to analyze clients and larger community issues helps meet the needs of communities in a holistic manner, resulting in more effective interventions through a strengths-based planned intervention process. When paired with public administration courses that have given me a better understanding of public institutions, I strive to build practical skills and knowledge that will allow me to work in a public leadership role with competence and integrity.

Recent courses in Social Welfare Policy and Policy Design and Implementation have contributed toward my goals to work in a policy role, helping shape the way we develop and administer programs to best serve the public through our governmental institutions.

I am honored to be the recipient of this award which I hope to represent positively in my upcoming practicum roles, serving the community of Omaha through case management and clinical applications. Thank you to the USSYAA and all my fellow alumni for your support and encouragement.



2025 \$2,500 ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

GREER SULLIVAN (NV 2015)

I am truly honored and deeply grateful to the United States Senate Youth Alumni Association for their generous support. The Alumni Scholarship will play a vital role in helping me pursue my goal of obtaining an LLM in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice from the University of Edinburgh this fall.

I have always known that I wanted to use the opportunities I have been given to give back, and in attending law school I discovered this want would be best served in a prosecutorial role. However, I am acutely aware that dealing in the liberties of others is not a task to be taken lightly. Through my clerkships at the trial court level and the Nevada Supreme Court, I have learned about the many ways that Nevada has adopted more progressive approaches to criminal justice. Yet, room for improvement remains. By pursuing this degree at the University of Edinburgh, I will be able to perform an exhaustive inquiry into the approaches that different countries take to criminal justice. Through this inquiry, I hope to identify approaches that minimize recidivism and implement holistic views on the criminal justice system. I will bring these viewpoints back to the Nevada criminal justice system and build on the approaches that emphasize rehabilitation over retribution.

With the support of the Alumni Scholarship, I will endeavor to expand and enrich my knowledge of criminal justice to ensure I can prosecute with not only conviction, but also compassion.



2025 \$2,500 ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

SERENE SINGH (CO 2015)

I am incredibly honored to receive the Alumni Scholarship. Since my time as a USSYP Delegate from Colorado, I have always known that this community and the USSYAA would continue to shape my life. From attending the weddings of friends I made during Washington Week to discovering job opportunities I would have never known about, this community has already transformed my path. And now, through this scholarship, not only will my academic journey be supported, but this community also continues to reinforce my commitment to making a meaningful impact. Thank you for this generous support!

We are very proud of our scholarship winners and confident that Rosalie Wynn Hearst would be delighted to see these awardees carry forward her vision for the program. These exceptional recipients exemplify the commitment to public service that our scholarship program was designed to foster and support.

★ ANNUAL ALUMNI WEEKEND ★ IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



From February 28 to March 2, 2025, more than 150 members of the USSYAA and their guests participated in our 26th Annual Alumni Reunion Weekend in our nation's capital. We reconnected with friends, shared important updates about the work of the USSYAA, met the incoming delegates of the USSYP Class of 2025, and gathered to officially present our annual recognitions and awards. Our 2025 Alumni Weekend kicked off a year of growth for our Association, *with a record 52 members of the Class of 2024 participating in person* – the largest number of members of a single class returning to Washington in the history of the USSYAA!

On Friday night, members gathered in downtown Washington for an informal welcome event, where dozens of our members were able to connect with old friends and make new ones. Our planning committee feels it's important to offer at least one informal event in Washington each year, and we'll continue this tradition in 2026.

On Saturday, the Board hosted the USSYAA's annual membership meeting at the Mayflower Hotel, where officers and directors updated our membership on the USSYAA's accomplishments in 2024, and our goals and projects for 2025. Following our membership meeting, more than 30 of our members were invited to participate in the official "Mentorship Tables" event in the Grand Ballroom at the Mayflower Hotel, where we were able to officially welcome the delegates of the USSYP Class of 2025 to Washington.

For years, the United States Senate Youth Program has graciously invited our members to share their academic and career accomplishments with the new delegates by acting as "mentors" at this very special welcome event. The mentorship tables are an evolution of what used to be called "Hospitality Day" at the Mayflower Hotel in the 2000s,

now with a mission to connect members with delegates who might be interested in pursuing similar career paths. Due to high interest and a limited amount of space, our planning committee will be offering a new way for members to register their interest in this event in 2026. Please stay tuned!



Saturday evening, the USSYAA hosted our annual Alumni Dinner & Reception at the Phoenix Park Hotel on Capitol Hill in Washington. This is always the highlight of our weekend, and we were thrilled to welcome a large number of members and their guests to celebrate the accomplishments of the USSYAA, our new membership programs, and to recognize our scholarship winners in 2025. After a wonderful reception and dinner, our officers presented scholarships to three outstanding members pursuing graduate work with a public service focus, we announced new initiatives for 2025, and we recognized valued members who have donated significant amounts of time and resources to the Association over the years. More information about these awards and programs can be found on our website.

On Sunday morning, members gathered at the Mayflower Hotel for a departure brunch at Edgar, the restaurant famously frequented by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover almost every day when he was in Washington. It was a pleasure to reconnect with old friends for a weekend, and welcome the Class of 2024 to the USSYAA. If you missed it, don't worry ... March is right around the corner! We're looking forward to seeing you and welcoming the Class of 2025 coming up in just a few months!

SAVE THE DATE
ALUMNI WEEKEND 2026
Friday, March 6-Sunday, March 8, 2026

In addition to the events described above, the planning committee is excited to announce a new panel event on Saturday morning featuring members doing incredible work across the country and the world. More information about Alumni Weekend events will follow soon. We're excited to see you in Washington!



CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Help Select Our First USSYAA Summer Internship Stipend Recipients!

STEVEN STACEY (AZ 2003)

The USSYAA is excited to announce our new Summer Internship Stipend Program, launching in 2026! This initiative will provide financial support to undergraduate students who take on unpaid or low-paying public service summer internships, helping ensure that all students can pursue meaningful experiences regardless of financial need.

As we prepare to open applications in early 2026, we're looking for volunteers to serve as application reviewers. Volunteers will read and evaluate student applications based on criteria such as commitment to public service, financial need, and the internship's alignment with the program's mission.

What's involved:

- Review applications digitally in spring 2026 (approximately 3–4 hours total commitment)
- Participate in one short organizational meeting to discuss criteria and evaluation
- Join a team of fellow alumni helping select the first-ever stipend recipients

If you're interested in helping shape this exciting new USSYAA initiative, please reach out to **Steven Stacey**, Liaison Officer, at Liaison@USSYAA.org to learn more or sign up.

Together, we can ensure that future leaders have the support they need to serve and grow through public service.



Program Year 2003 25TH REUNION PLANNING COMMITTEE LAUNCH

STEVEN STACEY (AZ 2003)

We're excited to announce that Program Year 2003 will hold its first 25th Reunion Planning Committee meeting in the first quarter of 2026. This committee will help prepare for our 25th Reunion, scheduled for March 2028 during the USSYAA Alumni Weekend.

The committee will begin coordinating outreach to 2003 alumni and exploring event formats for this milestone celebration.

If you're interested in joining or sharing ideas, please email **Steven Stacey (AZ)** at Liaison@USSYAA.org or **Arielle Linsky Stogner (MI)** at ariellelinskystogner@gmail.com. We look forward to reconnecting and celebrating together in 2028!

★ ALUMNI NEWS ★

Class of 1979

David Shanet Clark (WV 1979) participated in the With Honor Washington, D.C. Conference on October 8, 2025. Two U.S. senators, various members of Congress, members of Parliament, entrepreneurs, and ambassadors gathered to discuss democracy and current global strategic issues. Featured guests were Sir Robert Lord Salisbury, former head of the House of Lords and UK Defense Council, and former First Sea Lord Admiral Anthony Radikan, British Defense Chief and Lord High Constable of England. The event took place at 101 Constitution Avenue with stunning views of the Capitol, and was sponsored by Gallup, Foreign Policy, and the bipartisan veterans' group With Honor.

Class of 1982

John David Thompson (IA 1982) has released a 250-poem collection, one poem per year spanning our nation's existence from 1776 to the present. The book, titled *UNITED POEMS OF AMERICA: Poetry for United States' Semiquincentennial*, has been doing very well on the Amazon charts since its release in September 2025.

Class of 1985

Michael Auslin (IL 1985) has spent the past year-plus writing *National Treasure: How the Declaration of Independence Made America*. The first complete history of our founding document, 1776 to the present, will be published in May 2026 by Simon & Schuster's Avid Reader Press for the 250th anniversary of Independence. *National Treasure* tells the story of those who wrote, preserved, protected, appealed to, and even commodified the Declaration. As the great statement of American unity and the supreme expression of our ideals, the Declaration's history is America's story. *National Treasure* is available for pre-order now at <https://a.co/d/iVAoeku>, and Michael hopes the USSYAA community remembers their Program week in Washington while enjoying the book!

Class of 1988

Christine (Drager) Kurth (AK 1988) has worked for T-Mobile's Government Affairs team for over 10 years. Before working for T-Mobile, Christine worked at the FCC and also in the Senate, culminating her Hill career as Staff Director for the Senate Commerce Committee. She lives in Northern Virginia with her husband and teenage twin boys.

Class of 1992

Scott Jones (OK 1992) was called to be Senior Pastor and Head of Staff of the House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. He had been serving in Omaha, Nebraska, for the previous 15 years as the Senior Minister of the First Central Congregational Church.

Class of 1993



Courtney O'Donnell (PA 1993) enjoys keeping up to date on this group and learning about all of the great alumni and community news. She finished her term as the U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO last January after being appointed by President Biden and confirmed by the Senate to the role at this multilateral body. "It was an honor to serve the U.S. abroad and to lead efforts on a variety of issues relevant to America's National Security interests," said Courtney. After moving to Paris with her family to serve in the role, they have remained there and she recently started working for an Artificial Intelligence company in global affairs. Courtney hopes to get back to D.C. for future gatherings and wants know if Paris is in your travels! She sends all her best to the 1993 alums!

Jason Lillebo (SD 1993) currently works in Las Vegas doing professional development for K-12 teachers in computer science and gifted education. Through this work he connected with the person responsible at the Nevada Department of Education for the USSYP selection process, and for the past four years, he has volunteered to be a part of the selection committee. "It has been incredibly rewarding and inspiring each year, and getting involved in this way has helped me reconnect with the program. I've

also gotten to know our state's delegates as a result. They've certainly enriched my life by sharing their talents, and I hope I've been able to inspire them as well," shared Jason. He wants to encourage past delegates, if it's something they might be interested in, to reach out to their state contacts to see if they can get involved in a similar way.

Class of 1994

Fernando C. Saldivar (CA 1994) was ordained a Roman Catholic priest by Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles on June 14. He has been a member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits – USA West province) since 2016. Following his ordination, Fernando took up a position as the Special Assistant to the Dean and as an Affiliate Faculty member in Human Rights at LMU Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

Class of 1995

Luke DeKoster (IA 1995) and his wife Fiona live in his hometown of Hull, Iowa, and both work mostly online. Fiona provides trauma counseling for trafficking survivors, and together they offer marriage mentoring. Luke also helps with music and pulpit supply at their church. Their son is graduating from high school and their daughter will finish 8th grade this year.

Mary Beth Collins, J.D., M.A. (WI 1995) serves as the Executive Director of the UW-Madison Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies. In that role, she leads the center's efforts, designs and teaches courses, and serves as a speaker and facilitator for various civic health initiatives. She is based in Wisconsin but travels a lot for work and play. She has two adult children, both environmental scientists in the upper Midwest.

Class of 1997

Effective July 1, **Gil Valadez (DE 1997)** was appointed as PCI's Chief Operating Officer. Gil first engaged with PCI in 2016 as a consultant helping with a critical business transformation. After achieving a successful entrepreneurial milestone by selling his company to Ernst & Young, Gil left the Ernst & Young Partner career track to return to PCI in 2021 as their Commercial Segment Leader. Gil's leadership over the last four years has strengthened their market position in the Commercial Segment as they have expanded on their winning legacy; biotech capabilities have evolved into broader support of Big Pharma customers across the globe, and Advanced Drug Delivery (ADD) has been added to their capabilities.

Class of 1999

Chris Kaergard (IL 1999) continues to serve as Historian at the Dirksen Congressional Center, an archive and repository of papers for members of Congress. His major projects in the last year include work on the American Congress Digital Archives Portal, a multi-archive project creating access to primary source documents from six congressional archives for scholars, educators, and the general public. Documents he's worked to make available include Sen. Everett Dirksen's papers on civil rights and Rep. Bob Michel's *CODELS to Eastern Europe* during and at the end of the Cold War. Kaergard also continues to serve as an adjunct instructor at Bradley University, where he's teaching a special topics course on political communication in the spring. You can reach him at ckaergard@gmail.com.

Class of 2001

Matt Chingos (NY 2001) shared that in March, he joined the staff of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions as an Education Fellow. Working on Chair Cassidy's team has been a fantastic experience. The highlight so far has been contributing to the student loan reforms in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Nearly 25 years after USSYP and a career spent mainly on the policy research side, it feels like his life has come full circle. Matt would love to (re)connect with alums working on the Hill.

Class of 2002

Aaron Cross (WV 2002) moved to the Washington, D.C. area this summer and is currently attending the National War College.

Class of 2006

Alex Stroman (SC 2006) was promoted at Albemarle Corporation earlier this year. He now serves as Vice President, Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs, and leads the company's Washington, D.C. office. He and his husband, Kevin Walling, split their time between Washington, D.C., and Charleston, South Carolina.

Class of 2009

Following the end of his service as a federal prosecutor in D.C., **Peter Andrews (DE 2009)** moved to Philadelphia, where he is now the supervisor of federal litigation at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office.

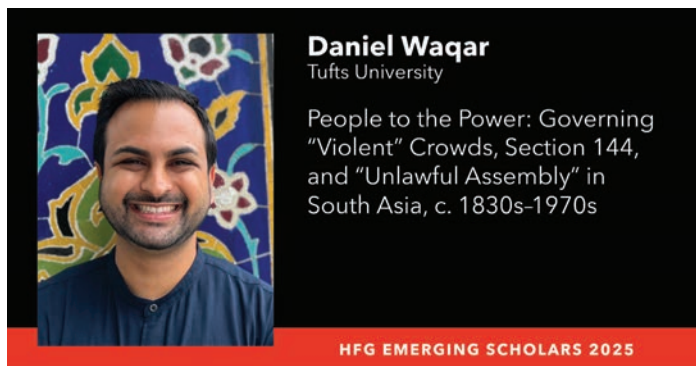
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Class of 2010

Zhan Okuda-Lim (NV 2010) is currently working on his dissertation and anticipates defending by June 2025 and earning his Ph.D. in Policy Analysis from the Pardee RAND Graduate School at the RAND Corporation. Zhan remains grateful to the USSYAA for the 2023 Rosalie Wynn and George Randolph Hearst, Sr. Alumni Scholarship that provided critical financial support as he completed his coursework and began to focus on my dissertation in earnest. In this final phase of doctoral studies, Zhan was recently selected for two opportunities. First, he was selected to attend 2025 Innovation Day hosted by the Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) and Arnold Ventures. This program brings together a select group of education policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to discuss critical issues in education policy before the 2025 AEFP Conference – which, coincidentally, will also be held at the Mayflower Hotel in March! Second, Zhan is one of 40 doctoral students across the country to be named a 2025 David L. Clark Scholar in Educational Administration and Policy by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), the American Educational Research Association (AREA), and Sage Publishing (a major academic publisher). Through this, he will meet with distinguished education researchers and fellow Clark Scholars at the 2025 AERA Conference in Denver and present his preliminary dissertation research during the Clark National Graduate Student Research Seminar.

Class of 2012

Brett Biebelberg (NJ 2012) began residency training in internal medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He is interested in pulmonology and critical care, critical care and health services research, and healthcare administration and leadership. He is always eager to catch up with fellow 2012ers.



Daniel Waqar (NV 2012) was recently named a 2025 Emerging Scholar by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the

Department of History at Tufts University. His research examines the history of British colonial-era unlawful assembly laws in South Asia and their continued use by governments worldwide today. The Harry Frank Guggenheim Emerging Scholar Award supports doctoral candidates in their final year of writing a doctoral dissertation examining a salient aspect of violence.

Class of 2013

T. J. Clark (IL 2013) now lives in Madison, Wisconsin, where he recently started practicing law at Burns Bair LLP. His practice focuses on insurance recovery actions for sexual abuse survivors and victims of financial fraud and personal injuries. T. J. graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School with honors in May 2024. In the last year of law school, he served as editor-in-chief of the Wisconsin Law Review. After graduation, T. J. clerked for Chief Justice Ann Walsh Bradley at the Wisconsin Supreme Court. But most importantly, earlier this year, he married the love of his life, Jenna Contreras. Jenna and T. J. are now making a home on Madison's east side with their dog, Albus.

Julian Pecora (WV 2013) shared that this past year has brought meaningful professional and leadership milestones. He continues to be based in Huntington, West Virginia, where he practices litigation with Dinsmore & Shohl LLP. Over the last year, Julian worked on several high-profile matters spanning West Virginia, Kentucky, and California, and was admitted to his second state bar in Kentucky. He was also named a Rising Star in Business Litigation in West Virginia and was honored as one of Huntington Quarterly's Five Under 35. Julian launched MeetUp West Virginia and MeetUp Tri-State, two expanding initiatives focused on young-professional development, collaboration, and cross-state networking. These groups are designed to create more opportunities for Appalachians, with a particular emphasis on strengthening connections and career pathways for people living and working in West Virginia. Julian was also elected Vice President of the Atlantik-Brücke New Bridge Alumni Council, where he helps advance stronger U.S.-European and transatlantic relationships. Earlier this year, Julian had the opportunity to moderate a transatlantic discussion at an Atlantik-Brücke gathering in New Orleans.

Jacob Podell (MI 2013) was laid off from his position as an attorney for the Chicago regional office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in February as part of the "DOGE" cuts. His commitment to public service, formed in part from his experience in USSYP, remains undeterred; although it is expressed a little differently now. Jacob is now an associate attorney at Wallace Miller, where he represents individuals suing corporations and other large bad actors in class actions and toxic torts. He also volunteers for a bimonthly pro bono clinic in Chicago's Chinatown.

Class of 2015

When he last submitted an update for the 2021 booklet, **Justin D. Shapiro (NY 2015)** was living in Tallahassee, Florida, and working as a speechwriter for Governor DeSantis. He continued in that role for three years until the summer of 2024, when he began law school at the University of Miami. In addition to law school, Justin continues to work for National Review, where he edits and fact-checks articles. If you are ever in South Florida or know of any law-related summer job opportunities there, feel free to give him a call at 516-314-9279.

Class of 2016

Carson Robb (UT 2016) graduated from The George Washington University Law School in May. In August, he married his law school sweetheart. He is now an Associate Attorney at Utah Legal Services.

Class of 2017



Madison Cline (KY 2017) met **Jake Ingoglia (IN 2017)** in 2017 during Washington Week and became good friends. After six years they reconnected and are now engaged! Madison and Jake will be tying the knot in June of 2027, 10 years after they met on that fateful trip. They thank the Hearst Foundation!

Cade Slaughter (MS 2017) began working in the office of Senate Majority Leader John Thune in January of this year.

Class of 2019

Since last year, **Catherine Daniel (AL 2019)** has passed her licensing exam and is now an occupational therapist. She is currently spearheading the occupational therapy department at Bridgeway ABA as its first OT and can't wait to see what the new year brings!

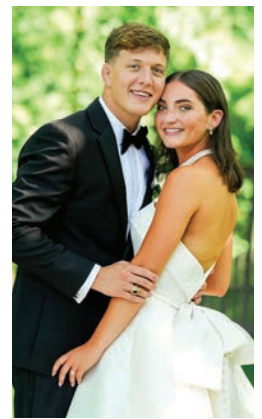
After starting DonorAtlas (the first donor research tool built from the ground up with AI) during his senior year at Harvard in 2024, **Will Schrepferman (IN 2019)** raised a \$3M seed round, moved to New York City, hired a (growing) team of amazing people, and in 2025, he has now worked with 200+ customers to date. He has worked with nonprofits, political campaigns, advocacy groups, schools, hospitals, and cultural institutions — any organization that needs to raise money from individual donors. He is also hiring, so if anyone knows ambitious early-career software engineers or fundraisers, he would love to meet them!

Jacob Bernard (NJ 2019) began 2025 as Press Assistant to the White House Press Secretary in the Biden-Harris administration, where he served as a lead point of contact for the White House press corps and had the honor to travel with the President across the country and to Latin America. Shortly after the transition, he joined the nonprofit legal organization, Democracy Forward, that advances democracy and social progress through litigation, policy, public education, and regulatory engagement. As Deputy Press Secretary, he secures national and local press coverage and launches the organization's Spanish media program.

Abe Baker-Butler (NY 2019) graduated from Yale College and moved to Philadelphia to work as a Research Fellow for Zeke Emanuel at the University of Pennsylvania. He is eager to meet fellow USSYP alums in Philadelphia!

Class of 2021

Katherine (LaReau) Metz (IN 2021) graduated from the United States Military Academy as the President of the Class of 2025 on May 24 and married her classmate, Mark Metz, on June 21, 2025! As a Barry scholar, she is now at Oxford University for two years studying for a master's in Energy Systems, followed by a Master of Public Policy next year. She will serve in the U.S. Army as an Adjutant General Officer for six years following her Oxford graduation.



Tyler Moore (PA 2021) was awarded a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) in the Slovak Republic beginning in September 2025. He will teach English to secondary students for 10 months while participating in a cultural exchange. Moore will also attend the EU-US Young Leaders Seminar in Brussels in March 2026. This year's topic will focus on the future of skills and leadership.

Class of 2025

Cassie Page (VA 2025) was recognized in June as one of Alexandria's 40 under 40 awardees by the ALX Chamber of Commerce. In August, Cassie was elected to the United Nations Association of the United States of America as their Youth Co-Chair. She lead national youth engagement at the intersection of AI, sustainability, and diplomacy. Cassie represents American youth at United Nations events, summits, and policy discussions while supporting a network of over 3,000 youth members and 20,000 general members in civic mobilization. In October, Cassie was published as a co-author and drafting member for *AI for SDGs: A Thematic Synthesis Aligning Artificial Intelligence With the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for an Equitable Digital Future*.



Donations to the United States Senate Youth Alumni Association are used to support our three-pronged mission statement:

- Building and maintaining avenues of communication among program alumni – through in-person and virtual events, including our annual alumni awards, informal happy hours across the country, our jobs board, and many others.
- Providing financial assistance for professional educational needs of program alumni. In 2025, we have provided **\$10,000** in scholarships to alumni.
- Supporting the William Randolph Hearst Foundation’s United States Senate Youth Program – we maintain strong relationships with the Hearst Foundations and host mentoring tables for USSYP delegates each year, and worked extensively with the Hearst Foundations to host an event at the Hearst Tower.

DAVID ZAVADSKY (WI 1990)

★ THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS ★

Between December 1, 2024, and November 30, 2025, the following individuals have made contributions to the organization, either through direct donations or through purchasing tickets to our annual dinner or New York event. We thank everyone for their contributions – without your support, the USSYAA would not be able to achieve its mission and goals.

Anonymous	William (Liam) Drake	Emily Lu	Jessica Salley
Andrew Abreo	Samuel Drummey	Sophie Lu	Sadie Sands
Chelsea Acheampong	Sean Dzierzanowski	Carlton Madison	Scott Sawaya
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Camillia Cadell	Nathan Kalhan	Iktae Park	Axel Urie
Ella Calvert	Ivan Kaplan	Amanda Patarino	Sciana Vertusma
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Wright Chen	Mert Kayabas	Kristina Pedersen	Violet Wang
Christopher Chesny	Layla Kelly	Jack Perenick	Grace Wei
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2026 ANNUAL ALUMNI WEEKEND

March 6-8, 2026 | Washington, D.C.

Join us for our annual awards dinner, networking events, and opportunities to connect with fellow alumni from across the country. Look for registration and program details at ussyaa.org and in future communications.



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

AARON CROSS (WV 2002)

Once again, I've had the pleasure of bringing together this year's newsletter, and what a joy it is to see the extraordinary work our alumni continue to accomplish across the nation. The spirit of fellowship and public service that thrives in our association would surely make Mom Hearst beam with pride.

Thank you for allowing me to serve in this capacity. I'm excited to continue strengthening our connections and sharing your stories in the years to come. Best wishes to you and your loved ones for the season ahead!