

My Winter Congress Experience

By: Jessi Young

On February 20th I had the privilege of going to Washington, DC, for JSA's three day Winter Congress. JSA stands for "Junior Statesmen of America" a national, non-partisan, student run organization. Over 900 high school students gathered on Capitol Hill for this great experience. I went with the South Jersey Homeschoolers chapter. We are the second homeschool JSA group in the nation and the first in New Jersey.

When we arrived at the Crystal City Double Tree Hotel, we were given Metro passes to travel to the Capitol. One of the neatest things we got to do was sit on the floor of the House of Representatives and listen to former Congressman Victor H. Fazio. It was exciting to think that we were sitting in the actual seats seen on C-SPAN. We also heard four other speakers in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. After this we ate dinner at Union Terminal. When we returned to the hotel we listened to Grover Norquest, our keynote speaker. By the end of the day we were excited to have an evening full of entertainment planned by the JSA student leaders.



The main part of winter Congress was the presenting, amending, and passing of bills in our student run House of Representatives and Senate. This took place on Saturday and Sunday. All the chapters prepared and submitted bills about topics of interest. Our bill was to establish a commission to investigate the problem of goose proliferation. We did very well for our first time and got far in the process, but our bill was not passed. I learned so much! Seeing the legislative process work and how bills could be debated and amended was fascinating. I was so inspired; I want to present a bill next year.

I had the best time, and I loved how our homeschool group grew so close. We met students from all over the Mid-Atlantic States and even Puerto Rico. Our trip was concluded by going on a tour of the monuments. This experience was amazing, and I would highly recommend joining JSA.

If you enjoy government, politics, and foreign affairs, you might want to consider participating in JSA and coming to the many programs they offer throughout the year. My calendar is already penciled in with the date of the next event: the New Jersey Regional held at Princeton University on March 21st. The theme of this free day is, "The Constitution 233 years later – have we remained true?"