

CJJ Youth Conference

July 23rd-24th, Washington, DC



CJJ Youth Rally Recap

Trying to recap two amazing days in Washington, DC with our nation's future juvenile justice reformists, lobbyists, policy-makers and maybe even a future president... How hard could it be?

Being in our nation's capitol in itself is amazing. The tone of our conference was set when the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention act passed in a voice vote out of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

During the two days in DC, I networked and learned with these impressive, young future leaders. I met some very diverse individuals I will always remember, and I will surely keep in contact with many of them. One of the youth that had the most impact on me was Symone Sanders. She is very involved in the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, and is the Youth Chair for the CJJ Youth Leaders Committee. She was recently hired as Bernie Sander's national press secretary for his 2016 Presidential Campaign.

This conference opened my eyes to some of the issues facing juveniles in the justice system. The things that some of the other leaders have gone through and rebounded from is truly amazing. Some of them have gone from being incarcerated for various offenses ranging from misdemeanors to felonies. Some of these individuals then went on to meeting President Obama on Juvenile Justice Reform.

The myriad of speakers and what they have to contribute to our cause was inspiring. Speakers ranged from the Director of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), to the Executive Producer of the "Hangover" movies, who was recently awarded the volunteer of the year award for the state of California for his work in Juvenile Justice. All of the speakers were from different walks of life but it was inspiring to see them all rally behind one cause.

One of my favorite components of the conference was the few hours that we spent on Capitol Hill. I got to meet with Alaska's senior senator Lisa Murkowski and her Chief Counsel Nathan Bergerbest. Senator Murkowski serves on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Justice so she was very interested in what she can do to better serve youth in the justice system.

Overall, the two days I spent at the Annual Coalition for Juvenile Justice Youth Leaders were truly amazing. I learned so much and I can't wait to translate that into being a better President for the United Youth Courts of Alaska board, as well as to inspire my peers to be better attorneys and judges in KPYC cases. I want to thank Kenai Peninsula Youth Court for giving me the opportunity to represent Alaska at this inspiring conference.