

A Strong Foundation

Ryan Blackburn | *Weekly Report 8/21 - 8/27*

The most impactful part of a journey is rooted in its start - the Independent Study and Mentorship program, even in just the first week, has shown to me that only diligence and steadfast passion will be tolerated to fulfill your mission in the professional world. Without the dedication and resolution to succeed, ISM will be lost on you; truly, I am beyond humbled to begin this journey and feel empowered to begin with a strong foundation built on the values I hope to reciprocate to others through this program.

The beginning introduction to my future mentorship has proven to be quite effective; I have not only been able to cement the core principles I will use to build up my understanding of state-level governmental law, but I have also grown in applying my professional understanding of image and character to promote a clear outline of the fields I need to further understand to more greatly develop my passion in American government. The most empowering element of researching my topic is the ability to, in the end, demonstrate to others the significance of political participation not only in a national sense, but as a member of your local community as well. All too often, I realize the privileges to free speech, liberty, and civic participation that Americans are granted in spite of the lack of human rights throughout the world otherwise; because of this, my actions in ISM are made to encourage others to become more aware of the circumstances and issues surrounding their everyday lives and detail the opportunities they have to make a change. With that, this week was also fruitful in demonstrating how a confident demeanor and driven mindset can progress my knowledge of what I need to focus on this

year to become more aware of the possibilities available to American citizens to be a part of local government. It has become clear that processes such as precinct, county, and district conventions or political party conferences are the backbone to the inner-workings of this country, and how, in topics such as these, I need to grow in my understanding.

Every student has a different experience in ISM; these words ring true as I hope to reform the way others view political participation and take on hot-button issues to one characterized by confidence and a sense of responsibility. Without an educated electorate, we, as American citizens, cannot truly fulfill the potential granted to us to change the world. I am beyond excited to bring about greater fulfillment of civic duty and hope that, from the ISM program, I learn more about methods to empower others to become an American constituent armed with knowledge, ideals, and passion.