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Pennsylvania Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program **Students Headed to Washington, D. C. and to Receive \$10,000 Scholarship**

January 13, 2025, Washington, D.C. —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) is pleased to announce that high school students Ms. Elizabeth Jane Shacklett and Ms. Anjali N. Verma will join Senator John Fetterman and Senator Dave McCormick in representing Pennsylvania during the 63rd annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 1 — 8, 2025. Elizabeth Shacklett of Wayne and Anjali Verma of Perkasio were selected from among the state's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation that will attend meetings and briefings with senators, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, and other officials throughout the week. Each delegate will also receive a \$10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study.

The USSYP was founded in 1962 by the sons of William Randolph Hearst and the senate leadership of the day -- Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey -- in response to the deep divisiveness and national anxiety following the McCarthy era. They outlined a plan to encourage America's most talented young people to consider public service as an important, life-long, and noble pursuit, sponsoring Senate Resolution 324, which passed unanimously. As stated in founding testimony, the program strives "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 provides two outstanding high school students from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity with an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it. Each student will also receive a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs. The Hearst Foundations have fully funded the program since inception; as stipulated, no government funds are utilized. ([United State Senate Resolution 324](#))

Elizabeth Shacklett, a junior at The Agnes Irwin School, serves as vice president of the Service Council. Lizzie is the founder and CEO of Literacy Is Lit, a nonprofit through which she has distributed more than 35,000 books to Title I schools throughout the Mid-Atlantic. She authored the children's book *I Read Before Bed*, which she shares in schools and libraries as a part of her "Learning with Lizzie" program to help inspire a love of reading and learning in the next generations. Through her work, she strives to increase literacy rates, fill educational gaps, and work towards a future where all children are empowered with the skills and confidence they need to succeed. Serving as Miss Pennsylvania's Teen 2023-2024, Lizzie participated in hundreds of service engagements across the state. She is also a Congressional Youth Cabinet member, lead ambassador for BookSmiles, teen advocate with the Philadelphia Alliance to Restore School Librarians, and an Irish dancer, placing 2nd in North America and 7th in the world. At school, she is on the student ambassador leadership team, an Honor Council appointee, deputy editor of the newspaper, Model UN vice president, and in the Bel Cantos acapella group. This past summer, she interned with a state senator and taught public speaking to high school students at a summer camp in Changsha, China. Having attended elementary school in Singapore, Lizzie wants to pursue majors in political science and Chinese and dedicate her life to the service of others through policy, diplomacy, or law.

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Anjali Verma, a senior at the Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School: University Scholars Program, serves as the inaugural president of the National Student Council, representing over a million students, 16,000 school administrators, and 30,000 advisers nationwide. She previously served as the 2023 state president for the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils. She is an advocate for youth mental health, school safety, and digital wellness, working on legislation and initiatives at local, state, and national levels. Anjali holds leadership roles in several organizations, including team lead for Work2BeWell's National Student Advisory Council, social impact manager for #ICANHELP x Digital4Good, and ambassador for Morgan's Message, an organization dedicated to athlete mental health. She has participated in the ACLU's National Advocacy Institute and serves on the Chief Science Officers International Leadership Council. She has trained peers on mental health and crisis response and mentored over 60 wellness clubs in over 20 states. Additionally, she co-created a national mental health resource guide with Providence Health's Work2BeWell Program. Anjali's work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Education Week*. She has presented at the U.S. Department of Education regarding school safety and mental health and recently visited the White House, where she had the opportunity to speak with the U.S. Surgeon General. After college, Anjali hopes to pursue public health advocacy and educational policy.

Chosen as alternates to the 2025 program were Mr. Sebastian Alexander Tan, a resident of Sewickley, who attends Sewickley Academy and Ms. Sloane Madeline Wolfe, a resident of Morgantown, who attends Twin Valley High School.

Delegates and alternates are selected by the state departments of education nationwide and the District of Columbia and Department of Defense Education Activity, after nomination by teachers and principals. The chief state school officer for each jurisdiction confirms the final selection. This year's Pennsylvania delegates and alternates were designated by Khalid N. Mumin, Secretary of Education.

In addition to outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to volunteer work, the student delegates rank academically in the top one percent of their states among high school juniors and seniors. Now more than 6,200 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 alumnus to be elected U.S. senator; Secretary of Transportation and former Mayor of South Bend Indiana, Pete Buttigieg, the first alumnus to be appointed as a cabinet secretary; Representative Sarah McBride, the second alumnus to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; former 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, and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the first alumnus to be elected governor.

Members of the U. S. Senate Youth Program 2025 annual Senate Advisory Committee are: Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina, the 2025 USSYP Republican Co-Chair and Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, the 2025 USSYP Democratic Co-Chair. The full USSYP Senate Advisory Committee includes the vice president of the United States and the Senate majority and minority leaders, and four senators from each party who lend their names in support. Serving on the 2025 Advisory Committee: Senator Susan M. Collins of Maine, Senator John Cornyn of Texas, Senator Jerry Moran of Kansas, Senator Pete Ricketts of Nebraska, Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, Senator Tina Smith of Minnesota and Senator Peter Welch of Vermont.

For more information please visit: www.ussenateyouth.org

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