



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Questions about your state's delegates, alternates or state selection process:  
Ms. Elizabeth Costanzo at elizabeth.costanzo@hq.dodea.edu or (571) 372-1883.

For general information about the United States Senate Youth Program:  
Program Director Ms. Rayne Guilford at rguilford@hearstfdn.org or (800) 425-3632.

**Department of Defense Education Activity**  
**Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program**  
***Students Headed to Washington, D. C. and to Receive \$10,000 College Scholarship***

**January 9, 2020, Washington, D.C.** —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announces that high school students Mr. Edward Vincenzo Balbo and Ms. Sophia Helen Marro will represent the Department of Defense Education Activity in the nation's capital during the 58th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 7 — 14, 2020. Edward Balbo of Sigonella, Italy and Sophia Marro of Casteau, Belgium were selected from among the DODEA's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation who will also each receive a \$10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study.

The USSYP was created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 and has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by The Hearst Foundations since inception. Originally proposed by Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey, the impetus for the program as stated in Senate testimony is "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 brings the most outstanding high school students - two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity - to Washington, D.C. for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it. The overall mission of the program is to help instill within each class of USSYP student delegates more profound knowledge of the American political process and a lifelong commitment to public service. In addition to the program week, The Hearst Foundations provide each student with a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs. Transportation and all expenses for Washington Week are also provided by The Hearst Foundations; as stipulated in S.Res.324, no government funds are utilized.

Edward Balbo, a U. S. resident of Oregon, is a junior at Sigonella Middle High School in Sigonella, Italy, where he serves as president of the Junior Class. Averaging a 4.21 GPA, Edward has been active in many models of government including serving as the Minority WHIP at Model United States Senate, a delegate at Model UN, and a DoDEA Military Kid representative in the 2016 inauguration. Edward feels that the Senate Youth Program will be a deep learning experience about how America functions and a catalyst for his goal of majoring in political science.

Sophia Marro, a U. S. resident of Illinois, is a senior at SHAPE American High School in Casteau, Belgium, where she serves as the president of the Senior Class and president of the American Legion Junior Auxiliary. She consistently participates in Model UN, wrestling, and varsity soccer, serving as captain of the team last season. In the summer of 2019, Sophie was selected for Girls State, and subsequently attended Girls Nation as an elected senator. Sophie has a strong interest in service and public policy and believes the Senate Youth Program experience will expand upon her interest from a new perspective, while also providing insight for future careers.

(more)

## **UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM**

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Chosen as alternates to the 2020 program were Ms. Rayna Elizabeth Alexander, a resident of Brandon, who attends Lakenheath High School in England and Ms. Nancy C. Gutzwiller, a resident of Okinawa, who attends Kubasaki High School in Japan.

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 DODEA delegates and alternates were designated by Thomas Brady, Director of the Department of Defense Education Activity.

While in Washington the student delegates attend meetings and briefings with senators, members of the House of Representatives, Congressional staff, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, an ambassador to the United States and senior members of the national media.

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 5,700 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 alumna to be elected U.S. senator; Senator Cory Gardner, the second alumna to be elected U.S. senator and the first to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the first alumna to be elected governor; former Chief Judge Robert Henry, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit; former Ambassador to West Germany Richard Burt, former presidential advisors Thomas "Mack" McLarty and Karl Rove, and Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana currently a candidate for president of the United States. Additional notables include former Lt. Governor of Idaho David Leroy, Provost of Wake Forest University Rogan Kersh, military officers, members of state legislatures, Foreign Service officers, top congressional staff, healthcare providers and other university educators.

**For more information please visit: [www.ussenateyouth.org](http://www.ussenateyouth.org)**