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Montana Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program

Students Headed to Washington, D. C. and to Receive \$10,000 College Scholarship

January 12, 2026, Washington, D.C. — The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) is pleased to announce that high school students Ms. Makenna Daryl Joy Monroe and Ms. Cecelia Greycen Spencer will join Senator Steve Daines and Senator Tim Sheehy in representing Montana during the 64th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 7 — 14, 2026.

Makenna Monroe of Florence and Cecelia Spencer of Missoula were selected from among the state's top student leaders. They will join the delegation of 104 outstanding high school students - two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity - for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it, meeting with Senators, the President, a Supreme Court Justice, and other high-level officials. Each delegate will also receive a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs.

About the 2026 USSYP Delegates:

Makenna Monroe, a senior at Stevensville High School, serves as the National Honor Society President. She also serves as the Captain of her school's Speech and Debate team and an officer in both Family, Career and Community Leaders of America and Distributive Education Clubs of America. Makenna has served as former President of Key Club, was previously involved in Mock Trial, is active in Academic World Quest, and is a mentor to younger students in her school's Big Jacket program. As a participant in the Mansfield Center's Project Bridge Youth Diplomacy Program, she furthered her knowledge of global diplomacy and international cooperation in South Korea. With a passion for civic progress and equality, she also volunteers on her local library community board and helps register local voters in the hopes of increasing youth voter turnout. Makenna plans to study political science and international relations in college, and is inspired to fight for equality, peace, and education on a global scale.

Cecelia Spencer, a junior at Hellgate High School, serves as the Junior Class President. A descendant of the Salish, Gros Ventre and Yakima Tribes, she is President of the Indigenous Student Union and has spent the last two years working on a project to integrate Salish language within her school through language-based art installations. She was a participant in the United States Youth Ambassador program to Ecuador and Co-President of Model UN. Cecelia worked on a political campaign, helped organize student trips to the Montana legislature to engage students in the political process and worked to bring homecoming festivities back to her school by raising thousands of dollars for the event. In everything that she does, highlighting her peers' voices is at the forefront of her leadership. Cecelia is also a recipient of the Jeanette Rankin Youth Peacemaker award, and a United Way Outstanding Young Philanthropist award for 2025 for volunteering in her community and helping to organize a Thanksgiving canned food drive. She hopes to major in political science in college.

UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

2026 Montana Delegate Announcement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Page 2

Chosen as alternates to the 2026 program were Ms. Ellie Smiley Langaunet, a resident of Missoula, who attends Frenchtown High School and Mr. Axel Riggs Butler, a resident of Bozeman, who attends Gallatin High School.

Delegates and alternates are selected by the state departments of education, including the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activities, after nomination by teachers and principals. The chief state school officer for each jurisdiction confirms the final selection. This year's Montana delegates and alternates were designated by Susan Hedalen, State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

About The United States Senate Youth Program

The 2026 United States Senate Youth Program Co-Chairs are Senator Katie Britt of Alabama and Senator Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts. The full USSYP Senate Advisory Committee consists of the Vice President of the United States and the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders who annually serve as the program's Honorary Co-Chairs; two Senators, one from each party, serving as acting Co-Chairs who each have keynote speaking roles, and an eight-member bipartisan Senate panel, four Senators from each party, who lend their names in support. Serving on the Advisory Committee for the upcoming program are: Senator John Barrasso, M.D. of Wyoming, Senator Steve Daines of Montana, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith of Mississippi, Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, Senator Andy Kim of New Jersey, Senator Angus S. King, Jr. of Maine, and Senator Elissa Slotkin of Michigan.

The USSYP is a competitive, merit-based program created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 by the sons of William Randolph Hearst and the Senate leadership of the day - Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen, and Humphrey. The USSYP is designed to encourage America's most talented young people to consider public service as an important, life-long, and noble pursuit. Senate Resolution 324 passed unanimously.

The Hearst Foundations have fully funded the program since inception, as stipulated in SR 324, no government funds are utilized.

USSYP alumni now number more than 6,300 and many go on to build legacies of public service. The distinguished alumni include Senator Susan Collins, the first USSYP delegate to be elected U.S. Senator; former Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, the first to be appointed as a Cabinet Secretary; Representative Sarah McBride, the second 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 to be elected Governor.

For more information, please visit ussenateyouth.org

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