



West Virginia Youth in Government

Ohio-West Virginia Youth Leadership Association

Leadership ~ Character ~ Service ~ Entrepreneurship ~ Philanthropy

The West Virginia Youth in Government has always been a forum that provides high school students a foundation of democracy and responsible citizenship. This year was no exception. All learned a valuable lesson in 2020. Like many great civic leaders before them, they learned that no matter what obstacle may try to detour you, you have a responsibility to serve others for the good of your school, community, state and nation. That is exactly what the Youth in Government participants did during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The students, advisors, volunteers, and YLA staff work throughout the school year in preparation of the Youth in Government conference held annually at the Capitol and Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia. The Covid-19 pandemic may have closed the brick and mortar structures the students treasure utilizing each year as they attend Youth in Government but it did not close a great learning experience for all. Youth in Government 2020 became Youth in Government Virtual 2020.

Youth in Government Virtual took on an experience all its own for the youth officers, legislators, justices, lobbyist, and press in 2020. The youth officers and committee chairs stepped up quickly learning the ins and outs of using Zoom then conveying what they learned to the rest of the students.

YLA was able to provide the students and volunteers with opening addresses from Governor Jim Justice, Chief Justice Tim Armstead and U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito. Following the opening ceremony, each of the House and Senate Committees used a different virtual committee room to present the legislation they had prepared. Should the bill pass committee, the authors presented it before the complete virtual chamber room. Electronic voting was available to the legislators.

Lobbyist were able to work to influence the outcome of legislation before the committees, the Model Legislature and Youth Governor while the press corps prepared the YG Daily News to keep everyone up to date on the proceedings.

Bills that passed on the chamber floors proceeded to the Youth Governor and his cabinet who also had a virtual room to conduct the business they had at hand.

In the virtual Supreme Court, the youth lawyers presented their arguments of appeal before the youth Supreme Court justices in their virtual court room. As with the legislators, the justices were able to retire to a separate virtual room to discuss the arguments and render their decisions.

Once the legislative and court business of the 63rd Annual Youth in Government were concluded, all the participants reassembled to elect the corps of youth officers for 2021 by electronic voting.

Overall, the students and volunteers agreed, although they missed the beauty of the Capitol and Supreme Court Complex, Youth in Government Virtual was an excellent learning experience for all. Be prepared for anything and expect the unexpected.

Youth in Government is more than just an event. There are many, many hours of preparation leading up to YG. Preparation for Youth in Government starts each summer with YLA's Leadership Summits in June. Students from all across West Virginia come to learn how to use their leadership skills to benefit their schools, families, communities and state. They learn to better cooperate with others by understanding not only the importance of expressing your views and ideas but also having an open mind to others' ideas and opinions. Living a life of service and being involved are key components to the life lessons learned at the summits. This is also where many get their first experience with Youth in Government. In 2019, Senior Leadership Summit was held June 16-22 with the Junior Leadership Summit being held June 23-29.

Fall Conference was held November 15-17 at Jackson's Mill. Fall Conference brings the groups together once again from across West Virginia to learn how to write their legislation or judicial cases. Research, public speaking and social interaction are other skills emphasized.

The final step before Youth in Government is the day the youth officers and cabinet members assemble to rate all of the bills and court cases. Bill and case books are then prepared for the students and volunteers to have at YG. This year each student received their book virtually.

As is the tradition of the Youth in Government program, YG youth accomplishes what no other program allows them to. Teens experience the civic leadership, the role and process of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of state government and citizenship. This year proved to be no different.

The youth took with them skills they will use throughout their lifetime:

- How to research;
- Improve their writing & debating skills;
- Improve their public speaking & social skills;
- Reasoning and debating:
- Critical thinking;
- Understanding concerns of others;
- Understanding issues affecting the state;
- Realizing others perspectives;
- Networking;
- Technology;
- Volunteerism and community involvement;
- Value of advanced preparation and work.

Youth in Government gives the youth the tools they need to become the active responsible adults our state will benefit from.

A Selection of 2020 Bills Signed by the Youth Governor:

BLUE HOUSE

- 3 Increased Penalty for Any Minor Using Nicotine
- 8 Allowing Student Athletes to Receive a PE Credit through Sports
- 16 To Require Every Public School in West Virginia to Have a Hand Sanitizer Station Outside Each Lunchroom
- 18 To Require all West Virginia Schools to Employ a Full-Time Nurse
- 22 To Protect More of West Virginia Forests
- 24 Tax Credit for Living Organ Donor

GOLD HOUSE

- 4 Late Arrival for Athletes
- 8 Mental Health Days
- 12 Free Breakfast and Lunch for All Students Who Attend Public Schools In West Virginia
- 20 Behavioral Counselors in Schools

BLUE SENATE

- 5 No Standard Test
- 9 Required Medical Training in Educational Facilities
- 18 A Ban on Disposable Plastic

GOLD SENATE

- 5 Promotion of Nuclear Power Plant Facilities in West Virginia
- 6 Tim Tebow Act
- 16 Underdogs

A Selection of Bills Passing on the Floor with No Action by the Youth Governor

BLUE HOUSE

- 19 Transgender Sports Participation
- 26 Improving the Energy and Economic Future of West Virginia

GOLD HOUSE

- 24 To Permit Disputes to be Settled by Legalized Dueling

BLUE SENATE

- 6 Compensation for Collegiate Student Athletes Likeness

GOLD SENATE

- 11 To Reform the State Personal Income Tax System

2021 YLA WV Youth in Government Officers

Governor - **Jada Stutts**, James Monroe HS
Senate President - **Cameron Thomas**, James Monroe
House Speaker - **Lauren Ballard**, James Monroe HS
Chief Justice - **Stephanie Persinger**, James Monroe
House Clerk - **Luke Jackson**, James Monroe HS
Senate Clerk - **Madison Vass**, James Monroe HS
House Chaplain - **Jakobey Meadows**, James Monroe
Senate Chaplain - **Luke Fraley**, James Monroe HS

YLA's Distinctive Difference

On-going process – Leadership preparation is a process, not an event;

Learn by doing – Leadership requires action best learned by doing;

Time away – Leadership preparation thrives with time away from everyday distractions—YLA offers Youth in Government, Model UN, Entrepreneurship and Leadership Summits at Horseshoe, plus teen leadership retreats and conferences;

Making a real difference – The value of leadership training must be measured by differences youth make in their homes, schools, communities, and world.

Youth Leadership Association

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