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Indiana 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. Shivani Ankit Desai and Ms. Ishita Masetty will join Senator Todd Young and Senator Jim Banks in representing Indiana during the 64th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 7 — 14, 2026.

Shivani Desai of Carmel and Ishita Masetty of Granger 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.

Shivani Desai, a senior at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School, serves as a Student Council Representative, a National Merit Semifinalist, and a Rising Star of Indiana. This past summer, she attended the American Legion Auxiliary's Hoosier Girls State, where she was elected Senator and Federalist Party Vice Chair. She is also Co-Captain of the Speech and Debate Team, mentoring novice members and competing in Public Forum Debate, where she placed 3rd at the state competition. She serves as Editor-in-Chief of her school newspaper, writing opinion pieces on local and federal politics and current events. Beyond journalism and debate, she is the founding President of the Pre-Law Club, a student-run club that is dedicated to the pre-professional development of high school students interested in law and public service. She is the President of the Learn Like Me Club, which brings volunteer tutors into local elementary schools. Shivani works as a researcher on the Advocacy and Policy Subcommittee of the Indiana Youth Advisory Board within the Indiana Department of Health. In this role, she focuses on policy development, youth advocacy, and advancing public health initiatives, particularly those affecting schools. After attending a liberal arts university and studying political science and economics, Shivani plans to obtain an advanced degree in public policy and pursue a career that promotes equity while improving the quality of life for all individuals.

Ishita Masetty, a senior at Penn High School, serves as the Mayor's Liaison for the Mishawaka Youth Advisory Council, where she helps spearhead city-wide initiatives for community development. Driven by the potential of using STEM as a catalyst for good, she co-leads Indiana Women IN Tech Week, the first initiative of its kind in the U.S. Having facilitated more than 25 workshops statewide and authored a children's book adopted by over 70 schools, she has inspired girls nationwide to explore futures in technology. She carries this mission into her work as the Founder of STEMble, an organization dedicated to expanding STEM access in underserved communities. Ishita serves on the Indiana Department of Health Youth Advisory Board, where she works to advance youth-centered public health initiatives and increase awareness of key legislation. As the Program Manager for the Retreat for Asian Youth Conference, she helped lead a statewide Asian youth conference, amplifying Asian American voices in leadership and identity. A Coolidge Senator, two-time South Bend Human Rights Commission Essay Contest winner, and national qualifier in Congressional Debate, Ishita hopes to continue using STEM to drive meaningful change in college, advancing equity-focused solutions nationwide.

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2026 Indiana Delegate Announcement

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Chosen as alternates to the 2026 program were Mr. Shawn Shi Feng, a resident of Carmel, who attends Carmel High School and Mr. Kris Nok Hang Lau, a resident of Newburgh, who attends Signature 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 Indiana delegates and alternates were designated by Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education.

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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