**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Mississippi Students Selected for U.S. Senate Youth Program**

JACKSON, MS - The U.S. Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announced two Mississippi high school students will represent the state during the 59th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 14 — 17, 2021.

Jacob Pearson of Corinth and Weston Archer Taylor of Petal were selected from among the state’s top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation who will each also receive a $10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study. Due to the pandemic, the 2021 program will break ground as the first-ever fully virtual Washington Week, designed to be a highly interactive and exciting education and leadership forum for the nation’s most outstanding student leaders.

The program’s alternates are Flowood residents Cass Rutledge, who attends Jackson Preparatory School and Vaibhavi Mahajan, who attends Northwest Rankin 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.

“I congratulate the delegates and alternates on their selections to this prestigious program. These outstanding students have been recognized for their hard work both inside and outside the classroom, and their families and schools should be proud,” said Dr. Carey Wright, state superintendent of education.

Created in 1962, the USSYP has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by The Hearst Foundations since its inception. 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. However, this year, the program will be held online.

The overall mission of the program is to instill a 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.

Pearson, a senior at Alcorn Central High School, serves as president of the Student Council. His high school career includes several leadership roles such as the Future Business Leaders of America president, Beta Club president, National Technical Honors Society president, and Senior Class vice president. He has been recognized for many academic core subjects and outstanding awards such as becoming a Hugh O’Brian Youth Leadership student ambassador. He is an active member of the Community Connections Mentoring Program, an opportunity for high school students to interact with intellectually and socially challenged children in the community. Other volunteering endeavors include the Rotary Club Food Drive and student poll worker in 2019 and 2020. Jacob plans to attend Mississippi State University, majoring in political science, and later attend law school.

Taylor, a junior at Petal High School, serves as the president of the National Honor Society and as a representative on the Mississippi Superintendent Student Advisory Council. He also was selected to serve as a U.S. Senate Page. He participates in multiple clubs revolving around government and business such as the Vox Populi (Voice of the People) club and the Future Business Leaders of America. He has volunteered for organizations such as the Edward Street Mission, Backpack Club, and the Petal Education Foundation Ambassadors.

After graduating high school, Taylor plans to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy and major in astronautical engineering, intent on becoming an Air Force test pilot. His plans include a run for a seat in the House of Representatives.

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