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In his own words: Zach Stute

2018 YOUTH TOUR

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"JUNIORS, THE YOUTH TOUR IS AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY!"

First, I would like to thank you, dear reader. You are most likely a co-op member and therefore directly responsible for sending me on the NRECA Washington, D.C. Youth Tour.

The tour was a wonderful and educational experience. Two experiences that stuck out were the time we spent at Arlington National Cemetery and the Iwo Jima Memorial. At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, we witnessed a changing of the guard. The rigidity and ritual of the changing was a fascinating look at American martial culture.

One evening, we watched Mike Pence's limousine as he pulled into a party at Ford's Theatre while waiting for our bus, and he waved at our group.

We also had the chance to visit the Capitol Building and meet with our congressional representatives. We had District 8 (that's us) Rep. Rick Nolan meet with our group, and he told us his opinions on our political problems. We were invited by Sen. Tina Smith to watch a session of the Senate from a gallery. Incidentally, that day, a senator from Connecticut was reminding the Senate about the prevalence of gun violence and presenting statistics.

There were approximately 1,800 other high school kids from different states' co-ops in Washington around the same time. One of them was a guy named Bryce from Mississippi. I, several other

Minnesota delegates and a couple of delegates from other states were all playing cards on the floor. Bryce joined us, and after talking for just a few moments, and a few exchanges of ridiculous jokes, I realized that I met myself in an alternate universe where I lived in Mississippi.

Juniors, the Youth Tour is an amazing opportunity, and I would recommend you at least try to get in next year's group. The cost of

entry is so low – only an application and an essay. You're making a bad choice in not at least trying. Believe it or not, some co-ops have trouble finding people to actually send on an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., so you individually have a really good shot of making it. At least go

on your cooperative's website and look. I would finally like to thank Beltrami Electric Cooperative and its members for providing this opportunity not just for me, but also for future and past delegates.

