



NJDOE News

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DOE Announces Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera and the Department of Education (DOE) today proudly announced the two high school students selected for the United States Senate Youth Program, an annual initiative that educates students nationwide in American politics and government.

Along with two alternates, the DOE selected Amanda Conway, a senior at Bernards High School in Somerset County, and Aniket Shah, a senior at Ridge High School, also in Somerset County.

"I am very happy to join the DOE in honoring both Amanda and Aniket," Acting Gov. Richard Codey said. "Now, more than ever, it is important for our young people to get involved, and stay involved, in government."

"We are so very proud to recognize these students," Commissioner Librera said. "We are continually impressed by students who know what they want and go after it with vigor and energy. It's one of the best parts about being an educator. Amanda's and Aniket's accomplishments are many, and we think these students will go far."

The two seniors selected will spend the week of Feb. 26, 2005 in Washington, D.C. There, both Amanda and Aniket will participate in a host of activities aimed at honing their leadership skills and nurturing their interest in government issues. The pair will learn more about senatorial procedures, bipartisanship and leadership.

It's safe to say that both students are strong leaders in their own communities.

Amanda, for instance, has been her class president since sophomore year. She is a charter member and co-President of the Key Club, and a charter member of Freedom's Answer, an organization run by the New Jersey Attorney General's Office and geared toward increasing voter participation.

"Amanda truly believes in giving back to her community," Principal Lynn Caravello wrote in her recommendation letter. "When I am seeking student input and/or student representation to serve on school or district committees, I always turn to Amanda Conway. She is insightful, reflective and honest."

A straight-A student involved in nearly two-dozen extracurricular activities, Amanda also volunteers in her community by participating in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk and Operation Santa, where she purchased gifts for underprivileged children in New York City.

Aniket, who has lived in three different countries in the last five years is the student representative for his local school board and is president of his school's National Honor Society chapter. He additionally serves as class president, is heavily involved in Amnesty International and tutors middle and elementary school children, among other endeavors.

"Aniket's ability to lead a meeting is impressive," Patricia Taavoste, Ridge High School's Student Government Adviser wrote in his recommendation. "He is organized (and he) speaks clearly and concisely. He asks for volunteers and commitments easily, and receives student cooperation and respect."

Aniket, also a straight-A student, has studied in America, Germany and India because of his father's job assignments. Such diversity in his upbringing has led the young man to an interesting career aspiration.

"I hope to follow a career in public service in the U.S. Government, working as an elected official for my country," he wrote. "Afterward, I would like to join the U.S. Foreign Service and help spread the American ideals of democracy and freedom to the rest of the world."

The United States Senate Youth Program is in its 43rd year. Each state is invited to select two high school students, and two alternates, to attend the week-long program. The students receive a \$5,000 scholarship and all

expenses in Washington are covered. The program is open to public and private schools.

The Department of Education administers the program. Once applications are distributed and collected, the DOE convenes a panel of experts in social studies and government and selects the students based on the following criteria: leadership qualities, academic standing, community involvement and clarity in speech and thought.

The alternate students selected this year were: David Earl, a senior at Middlesex High School in Middlesex County, and Lauren Stokes, a senior at Kent Place School in Union County. David, the president of his class, is heavily involved in numerous activities, including basketball, band, the school newspaper and the Future Business Leaders of America.

Lauren is the Senate President at Kent Place School, an all-girls college preparatory school in Summit, NJ. She is involved in her school's drama and film clubs and is the Features Editor of Ballast, the school newspaper. She is also involved in the Girl Scouts of America, where she planned and raised funds for her troop's trips to Mexico and Switzerland.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.