

Ad Astra Academy Report

This summer I was honoured to be selected to be part of the 2023 class of the Washington Ireland Program. The Washington Ireland Program aims to support leaders committed to building a future of peace and prosperity for Northern Ireland and Ireland through a leadership and community service programme. As part of the programme, I spent 6 weeks in Washington D.C where I undertook a legislative internship with Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer. In this capacity I led tours of the Capitol, answered calls, conducted policy research for an upcoming bill, attended Senate briefings and committee hearings and wrote memos. It was a truly versatile experience that provided me with an in-depth insight into American politics and policymaking.



Another component of the programme was speaker sessions with leaders in politics, business, law and a variety of other disciplines. We met with Michelle O'Neill, Cody Keenan, Ambassador Fergal Mythen among others. I had the privilege of chairing the speaker session with Jess O'Connell, the founder of NewCo and former advisor to Hillary Clinton and Pete Buttigieg, In addition, we got the opportunity to visit the White House and meet with some of the staff there such as Carmel Martin (Deputy Assistant to the President).



Another large component of the programme was the service aspect. We visited various charitable organisations in D.C to meet the staff there and see first-hand the amazing work they do to improve their city. These visits were some of the most rewarding of the whole programme and gave me a real insight into the inequality in display in D.C.



Finally, we visited New York where we visited the United Nations and attended sessions with various leaders such as Dame Louise Richardson, Charles O'Byrne, and Michael Dowling. All in all, I acquired invaluable skills, made life-long friends and learned about career paths that I previously had never considered. I am immensely grateful to the Washington Ireland Programme and Ad Astra for allowing me to make the most of this incredible opportunity.