

# Oregon YMCA Youth and Government Newsletter

## Vol.1, Issue 2, June 2023



### **Delegates, advisors, parents, volunteers, and more,**

We are excited to bring you the second edition of the Oregon Youth and Government monthly newsletter, presented by the Press Corps. In this installment, events from both April and May of 2023 will be combined to update you on all things Oregon YAG.

### **Post Conference Meetup**

On April 29th, Youth and Government members from all over Oregon met at the Salem YMCA for a Post Conference meetup. We spent time writing letters to our government officials, learning about different summer YAG opportunities, and most importantly connecting with our fellow Oregon Youth and Government members.

The main activity during the meetup was writing to our Senators and Representatives in favor of [Senate Bill 531](#). The bill would provide funding for after-school and summer programs for kids in all districts of Oregon to pursue their interests and education. Many of us who wrote letters got a response from the Representative/Senator we wrote to, acknowledging the importance of the bill. Currently the Senate is not in session due to a walkout, meaning SB 531 has not been discussed. However, we will keep everyone updated as to the progress this bill makes.

Additionally, Youth Governor Johnson informed us about the Conference on National Affairs that is happening this summer. We have more than double the members from last year representing Oregon at CONA July 1-6. We wish all delegates luck as they present their proposals.

Furthermore, West Salem delegate and Senior Cady Wood informed us about a new council that is starting up soon (more info to come) that will allow students in YAG to have more of a voice as to the organization's functioning.

To wrap up the reunion we enjoyed refreshments while sitting outside and catching up with our friends from other delegations. The first-ever post-conference meet-up

was so fun and a definite success! We look forward to more in the future and thank all those that made the event possible.

## **YMCA Changemakers Project**

Though all statewide events are completed for the season, the nationwide YMCA Changemakers project recently gave two innovative students the opportunity to make a large impact on their local community. The project takes entries from across Oregon, and every other state, for project proposals designed to solve a local issue, and picks one winning pair from each state to take their proposal all the way to Washington, DC. While there, the changemakers will present their proposal to the Youth Governors from all over the nation, with the chance to be one of the top three pairs going home with a \$5,000 grant to put their plan into action. Last year's Oregon Changemakers made it to the top five!

Students at Sherwood High School and members of Oregon Youth and Government, Jenessa Rose and August Hartman won the Oregon Changemakers project with their idea of Accessible Civics Engagement for Gen-Z Oregonians (ACEGO). In an interview, the two say that ACEGO is a plan to make young people more involved and aware of our government "by creating easily digestible social media posts to inform them on local and state issues" and building more opportunities for teens to have hands-on experience with our government. The friends came up with this idea as they were looking at much bigger projects and finding that, as teens, it would be hard to put such complicated and systematic tasks into effect. "That's when we realized we could base our project on the very notion of getting teens involved in politics," they say. Rose and Hartman hope that this project will change the lack of political awareness in young people, as well as provide those who want to be involved, but may not have time or resources, with options.

ACEGO has already been put into action on a small scale, and it has proven its worth as a means of supporting political action in teens. Rose and Hartman created the group Bowmen for the Levy, with the aim of passing an education levy in their school district. The group got students involved in the issue through social media posts and engagement opportunities, eventually leading to the levy being passed. The two say that, "when the levy passed, we knew ACEGO was going to make a difference and we became even more passionate about it." With this passion, the next step for them is presenting their project in Washington, DC. This huge opportunity could potentially lead the two to fly home with \$5,000 towards the project, thanks to their hard work. The pair set a great example for all students looking to get involved and are showing that it is never too early to make an impact. We wish them the best of luck as they present their proposal June 14-16.

## Conference on National Affairs (CONA)

As we look forward to the Youth Governors Conference and the presentation of Changemaker proposals, another wonderful YAG opportunity is just around the corner. On July 1-6 delegates from Oregon will take part in CONA, or the Conference on National Affairs at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, NC. While there, they will present proposals while gaining valuable knowledge on national and international affairs. Caleb Chan and Cash Yount are two of the Oregon Youth and Government delegates who will be attending CONA. They kindly provided more information on their proposals, as well as what the experience means to them. The two agree that skills learned at CONA can take you far, with Cash saying, "...the skills taken from this experience give you the ability to think critically and delegate on your own pressing ideas." Caleb says, "CONA helps people to become more aware of global and national issues, and people from other state's perspectives. The United States is massive, a proposal from Oregon can be seen with a very different perspective by a delegate from Massachusetts, it's always worth it to see different perspectives from all over the US."

Though both delegates' views on the conference and its benefits are positive, they have drastically different proposals they are hoping to pass. For Cash, he "wanted to take [his] experience with YAG to the next level," and his proposal "is about giving Fire Departments in Rural cities a tax subsidy to help fund for more modern tools." He noted that he is "beyond excited to get to represent rural Oregon...this upcoming conference." Meanwhile, Caleb's proposal is regarding a treaty to de-alert nuclear weapons. He says the proposal, "basically means that instead of nations continuously keeping their nuclear weapons ready to launch at a moment's notice, and to add mechanisms or physical barriers to lengthen the time needed to use nuclear weapons, this could include from removing nuclear warheads to store in a safe location to simply adding a slab of concrete on top of launch silos. This will make launches due to false detections or other errors impossible and also will be a good starting point for mutual trust for disarmament." He also added that he chose the topic because "I've always been interested in international affairs, and I saw this topic from a TV show, it's also a tough proposal to advocate for."

We wish Caleb, Cash, and all of the other Oregon delegates a safe and fun time at the conference and send them good wishes toward getting their proposals passed!

## Department of Education Internship Opportunities

Though YMCA programs like CONA and Changemakers provide opportunities for students to become civically involved, the U.S. Department of Education provides an excellent opportunity for students currently enrolled in an accredited institution

to engage in an 8-10 week internship related to their desired field of study. The application for the fall session closes on July 31st, and more information can be found [here](#). Multiple areas of interest are available, including data analytics, education policies, communications, and more. If you are interested in diving deeper into your future career interests, or learning more about a new field, we highly encourage you to apply for this internship.

## **Oregon Health Authority Focus Group Opportunity**

Thanks to all YAG delegates and press corps members who participated in the project to work with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to survey youth (aged 15-18) about health behaviors. They are trying to develop a reliable survey that will collect information on teen health behaviors while best representing all cultural backgrounds. To do this, they have been conducting focus groups this spring, where youth will be testing our survey to ensure we are asking questions accurately and in a way that youth from all backgrounds will understand. **Students who participate receive a \$50 gift card.**

The organizers thanked us for gathering some YAG members to participate in their focus groups - they have given some great insight thus far for their survey. They just added two new dates, and are looking for more participants. Follow this link <https://us1se.voxco.com/S2/8/OYSOFG2023/>

## **Closing Thoughts**

Thank you for taking the time to read the second ever Oregon Youth and Government monthly newsletter. If you have anything that you would like to be included in next month's edition, please feel free to DM us on instagram @oryagpress.

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