

Proposal for Youth Delegates at the United Nations General Assembly



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“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt



Introduction

This is a proposal to the United States' mission to the United Nations to create a program that will enable three young people aged 15- 24 to become delegates to the United States' mission and attend the General Assembly on behalf of the United States' government and the American youth. These delegates will represent the United States and will deal with issues of primary concern to youth. They will work with other youth delegates representing other member states on youth issues and initiatives. Youth delegates will travel with the country's official delegation to the General Assembly at the United Nations Headquarters in which they will participate in the Third Committee hearings where the topics with most relevance to youth are discussed. This proposal outlines the reasons these delegates should be adopted, how they would be selected, and how they will benefit the United States' government and its mission.

Why have youth delegates?

As defined by the United Nations, youth are people aged 15-24 and make up over one sixth of the world population and yet youth are an often marginalized sector of society. The way youth are perceived in America is a great challenge that needs to be overcome. Youth are often perceived by media and other outlets as troubled, irresponsible, and lazy. While this may provide entertainment for some, others would enjoy supporting programs and organizations that portray youth in a good and positive light. Introducing a program such as this one will enable America's youth to become involved in policies that affect their everyday lives. It will show them that young people can make a difference on a local, national, and global scale. The United Nations General Assembly has recommended four times that Member States include a youth representative in their delegations, beginning in 1981 with Resolution RES/36/17. In particular, the *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, which repeated this in calling upon Member States to:

"...Include Youth Representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings, thus enhancing and strengthening the channels of communication through the discussion of youth-related issues, with a view to find solutions to the problems confronting youth in the contemporary world."

In 2008, seventeen countries- Australia, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Jamaica, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia , Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, and Thailand- sent youth delegates to participate at the General Assembly. As a founding member of the United Nations and a member with a permanent seat on the Security Council, and hosting the General Assembly in our own country, the United States should be an example to all member countries to invest in their youth by including youth delegates in their missions. With the adoption of youth delegates, the United States will lay the path for other member countries to include such programs in their own missions.



What do other countries do?

Youth delegation programs have been implemented differently around the world. Each state has customized their youth delegate program to make it as successful as possible. Presented below are several factors that are implemented in Australia, Denmark, The Netherlands, and Switzerland.

AUSTRALIA

Length of Program: Each year since 1999.

Number and age of representatives: One delegate, between 15 and 24.

What costs are met: The Australian Government pays for costs of accommodation in New York; the remainder (flights, living expenses, consultation and follow up work expenses) comes from sponsorship which the Youth Representative must obtain themselves through fundraising.

Length of stay: Eight weeks in 1999, 2000, 2001 and six weeks in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Selection Procedure: Australia wide selection process open to all under 25. The United Nations Youth Association, in conjunction with another youth organizations and the past two Youth Representatives select the Youth Representative through a national application and interview process.

Role while in New York: Provision of youth opinion within the Australian Delegation. The youth representative is based in the Third Committee, and delivers a statement to the Third Committee, including the biennial youth resolution. The Youth Representative lobbies for greater youth participation within the UN system.

Role in Australia: The Youth Representative consults with youth organizations in Australia. On return from New York, the Youth Representative shares their experiences at universities, schools and other gatherings of young people.

DENMARK

Number and age of reps: Two delegates, between 18 and 30 years old

Length of Program: Since 1970

What costs are met: Identical to Parliamentary Advisers – airfare, hotel suite and daily allowance.

Length of stay: Two youth representatives attend for a total of six weeks, three weeks each.

Selection Procedure: Candidates send individual applications through their own organizations, which then send nominations to the Danish Youth Council (DUF), an umbrella organization for 74 national youth organizations. DUF is responsible for final selection.

Role while in New York: Delivers youth statement to Third Committee, represents the mandate given by the Danish Youth Council (subject to confirmation by the Danish Foreign Ministry), works to put youth on the agenda of the UN and its institutions and advises the Danish Delegation on youth matters.



Role at home: The Youth Representative facilitates the preparation of the DUF strategy towards the UN in consultation with the member organization of DUF, meets with a number of UN agencies, promotes the role through the media, reports back to DUF on return and is an active member of the DUF's UN working group.

NETHERLANDS

Length of Program: 34 years.

What costs are met: Flight, hotel suite and a comfortable allowance.

Length of stay: Four weeks.

Selection Procedure: The Youth Representative is selected by the National Youth Council that comprises over 30 Dutch youth organizations. This umbrella organization is responsible for selection and preparation. The selection process is open to all under 26.

Role while in New York: Active in the Third Committee, proposes and drafts the biennial youth resolution. Delivers the Dutch youth statement to the Third Committee. Advises the delegation on other matters – contributing a youth perspective to the delegation's approach. Active in representing and lobbying for the Netherlands.

Role at home: Consulting with youth organizations and youth political parties, reporting back to over 30 youth organizations and youth political parties, establishing a tour of schools speaking about the Millennium Development Goals, holding a UN information day open to all youth, reporting back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, actively participating in the National Youth Council's international political committee and participating in the Dutch delegation to the Commission on Social Development.

SWITZERLAND

Length of Program: since 2003

What costs are met: Airfare and hotel suite and credit for parallel program back home.

Length of stay: 10 days; the period of the negotiation with regard to the Youth resolution.

Selection Procedure: The National Youth Council selects 5 youth delegates. They prepare together the work for in New York and the follow up.

Role while in New York: Since it is the first year, the exact tasks are still to be established. The youth rep is actively involved in the process of describing the job description. The main task this year was participating in the negotiations with regard to the Youth resolution.

Role at home: Represent the interest of youth organization in Switzerland and advises the Swiss delegation on issues concerning youth. Reports back to the Youth organization in Switzerland, on the development of youth issues at the UN.



Other United Nations member states have also participated in the youth delegation program. Some of these member states include:

- Austria
- Bahamas
- Ethiopia
- Greece
- India
- Bulgaria
- Finland
- Germany
- Ghana
- Mexico

What should the United States do?

The United States is in a unique position in that we are able to view many aspects of other countries successful agendas and unite them into one extraordinary program. Programs around the world are varied but each program has one consistent factor- to inspire young people and motivate them to get involved. Below is a proposed profile of what the United States program may look like during its initial year.

UNITED STATES

Length of Program: First year 2011

Number and age of Youth Reps: Three delegates between the ages of 15- 24 as defined by the UN.

What costs are met: Identical to Parliamentary Advisers- airfare, hotel suite and daily allowance.

Length of stay: Three delegates will stay in New York for five weeks.

Selection Procedure: There will be a national application and interview process open to all American citizens between the ages of 15- 24. Three delegates will be chosen to serve as a US Youth Delegate for one year.

Role while in New York: Delivers youth statement to the Third Committee. It is also to network with other youth delegates to understand issues affecting the youth around the world and the techniques used to tackle them. Youth representatives may also lobby for more youth participation at the UN.

Role at home: After returning to their hometowns, delegates will share their experiences at universities, schools, and other youth organizations. May hold a UN Information Day that is open to all youth around the country. Youth Delegates will continue to advocate for American youth.

What will the youth delegates do?

Before attending the General Assembly, youth delegates will:

- Initiate events and speak to young people about their problems in their own community and what they feel should be done
- Attend briefing sessions with the United States Mission to the United Nations to become familiar with the work of the United Nations of youth issues



- Liaise with youth organizations, schools and universities to uncover the most pressing issues facing today's youth
- Study initiatives taken by other youth delegates around the world

While at the General Assembly, delegates will:

- Youth Delegates will participate in the full duration of the Third Committee.
- Delegates will deliver statements on issues facing young people in America on their behalf. Delegates will provide youth input on agenda items such as human rights, education, and social development among others.
- Delegates will also network with other youth delegates present from other member countries to exchange information and discuss their experiences and possible solutions for these problems.
- In addition, youth delegates will also work together to promote further youth participation at the UN.

After attending and participating in the General Assembly, youth delegates will:

- Continue to improve the image of young people.
- Bring back a wealth of ideas to the local youth community and society in general.
- Encourage other young people to participate more fully in America's development.
- Initiate events, internet discussions, and other forms of outreach in order to inform others of their roles as national delegates to the UN General Assembly.
- Create an organization focused on furthering youth outlook and participation.
- Assist in the selection process of future delegates.

Who will the youth delegates be?

Youth Delegates will be American citizens between the ages of 15- 24. The United Nations has officially defined a youth to be between the ages of 15-24. By using this age bracket for the youth delegate program, the US will give all of the American youth a chance to participate in the program. In addition, delegates will portray preferred traits and skills. Youth Delegates will need to be culturally sensitive and be able to represent the diversity of the American youth. They must also be resourceful, forward looking, industrious, and responsible. Strong analytical, interpersonal, and communication abilities are also essential. They should also enjoy keeping up with current affairs, working within a team, and have demonstrable interests in the United Nations.

How would the United States' selection process work?

The United States selection process will be open to all American citizens between the ages of 15-24. A national application and interview process will be held and three delegates will be chosen to represent the interests of America's youth at the UN General Assembly. These delegates must



be able to travel to New York for a five week period and must successfully pass a drug test and a thorough background check. The application will be comprised of questions about the applicants past leadership experience, future aspirations, why they would like to be a delegate, among other questions about their background and experiences. Application will be available on October 1st and will continue to be accepted until December 31st. Beginning in January, applications will be sorted through and will begin interviewing a small number of qualified applicants. Applicants will then undergo a second round of interviewing until the final three delegates are chosen. Successful candidates will then undergo security clearance and begin preparing for their tenure in New York. All three delegates will then liaise with youth organizations, schools and universities to uncover the most pressing issues facing today's youth. After meeting with young people around the country, delegates will fly to New York to represent them in front of the General Assembly.

What will this cost?

The cost of adding three United States Youth Delegates will be identical to hosting three additional delegates. Youth delegates are a part of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations and their costs will be identical to current ambassadors. These costs will include: airfare, hotel suite and a daily allowance. In comparison to every other youth delegate program, the United States will benefit by saving money on international airfare. If airfare is purchased far enough in advance, the United States stands to save thousands on airfare alone compared to other member states.

How could this idea be developed over time?

Initiating a youth delegate program will provide many young people a life changing experience. This hands-on program will give America's youth a look into the daily workings of the UN and its top officials. Even with an initially strong program, the United States Youth Delegate at the General Assembly program can be further developed over time. Year after year as young delegates enter the program, the United States may discover deficits and surplus in some areas. For instance, the US may wish to include more youth delegates in the program as they see fit. The US may also decide to adjust the amount of time youth delegates spend in New York. As the program flourishes, many of these changes are expected to occur. In addition to changes in the program, the United States may experience developments and creations of new youth organizations. Youth Delegates may wish to create a National Youth Council after their time at the UN in hopes to motivating more youth to get involved. The creation and developments of these youth organizations will further the mission initiated in the youth delegate program.

How would the United States government benefit?

The creation of a youth delegate to the United Nations program is a highly conspicuous and tactual affirmation by the government of their commitment to young people. Implementing and promoting youth participation in the United Nations General Assembly will inspire young people



to get involved and help solve problems facing society. These problems currently facing young people in America will not only affect today's society but future generations as well. It is essential that America's youth are able to address and create a solution for these problems. Young people have unique insights that can contribute to the development of more effective solutions to the problems youth and society face as a whole.

By enabling youth to hold more responsibility in organizations such as the UN, they will feel increasingly obligated to participate in activities at the local and national level. This sense of responsibility may ultimately increase voter turnout at elections. President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign is an example of what can happen when America's youth are inspired and engaged in the formulation of the progressive agenda. President Obama's 2008 campaign used an unprecedented amount of social media such as Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter to connect him directly to America's youth. By engaging and actively pursuing the youth perspectives on important matters, Barack Obama captured the attention of over 23 million Americans under the age of 30 which many believe won him the presidency. Ultimately, by including youth delegates as a part of the United States mission will allow the United States to claim the legitimacy of representing the interests of the American youth and promoting their voices in global decision making.

“How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living?”

- Henry David Thoreau