Dear Granite Girls State Staff,

We want to think you sincerely one more time for giving us the opportunity to participate in Girls Nation; although we do not believe any extent of thanks will be sufficient enough to fully express our gratitude. As the girls from previous years have probably stated, ALA Girls Nation was truly a week to change a lifetime. This program showed just how much power women have, and motivated two granite girls to believe in themselves more than they ever had. Throughout the week, we met so many important people, visited important sites, and built nationwide relationships that will last a lifetime. Here are some of our favorite parts of the trip (and pictures attached above) that we would like to share with you:

When we arrived on the Saturday, we had quite a hectic airport experience... our flight got delayed by three hours! But, this was not a problem for the staff; in fact, most of the girls had delayed flights. From the moment we stepped off the airplane, we were warmly welcomed and made a part of the Girls Nation family. By the end of the first night, we had already formed strong friendships with the girls in our community and those we had met in the airport.

On Sunday we had the honor of visiting Arlington Cemetery and observing the changing of the guards at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We were very impressed by the solemnity of the ceremony, especially considering that the guards were in full uniform while the temperature was over 100°F! Afterwards, we saw the graves of the Kennedy family and walked through the “Women in Military Service for America” Memorial Museum. We will never forget the time we all made a wreath of poppies at Girls State, and we got to experience this once more at Girls Nation, placing it in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. One of the most touching moments of this day was when we gathered in a building across from the tomb to remember our veterans, singing Flander’s Field as the echo of our own voices surrounded us and invited others in to pay respects with us.

Monday was our first day of senator fun! This was the first day of senate sessions. Senate sessions were one of our favorite parts! At first, the past paced tempo and unfamiliar words can trap you in a whirlwind of Parli Pro and strongly opinionated individuals. However, as we became familiarized with this procedure, they become a well-oiled machine of people working together
to thoroughly shape our nation. We also both got to speak a few times to state our opinions or question an aspect of the bills! Unfortunately, there was not enough time to get to our resolution, but we learned so much regardless and practiced the skill of being firm in our stances and beliefs.

On Tuesday, we spent several hours visiting memorials around Washington, D.C., including the Washington Monument, World War 2 Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Korean War memorial, and the Vietnam War Memorial. To begin this experience, we sang songs in front of the National Mall for all to hear (including some of the songs we sang at Girls State!!) The Merchant Marine Marching Band performed in front of the Lincoln Memorial, which was a memorable and beautiful sight to behold. We visited the Pentagon memorial, which was an extremely touching experience, and even got to meet a man who was also paying his respects and was in the building when the event occurred. Each girl was given a rose to lay on an individual memorial and it was heart touching to pay personal respects to a victim. We departed these memorials with an even greater appreciation of our country’s history and the sacrifices our veterans, forefathers, and fellow citizens have made.

On Wednesday, we went to the Dwight D. Eisenhower building and had the honor of meeting Vice President Pence. He talked to us for 30 minutes (even when his staff was urging him to get going!) and discussed topics such as bipartisanship, his relationship with President Trump, and the opioid crisis, in addition to empowering each and every one of us as the future female leaders of our country. After this incredible experience, we went to the Twilight Tattoo. This was a show that was nothing like anything we had seen before, and we learned about American history while also being in awe of the talent of our veterans and those on active duty.

On Thursday, we spent the day on Capitol Hill. We were able to talk with one of Senator Jeanne Shaheen’s staff members and take a picture with Senator Maggie Hassan. We saw the 9 seats of the Supreme Court justices and walked through the Library of Congress.

On Friday, we continued with the Senate sessions that we have been having all week, including on Sunday, Monday, and Thursday.
The most bitter sweet part of the trip was saying goodbye to our best friends. The night before we left, our communities pulled “all-nighters” and played games, had dance parties, and demonstrated our karaoke skills! However, the morning that our flights left, it was very hard to leave everybody. Being from across the country, we are all making plans to visit each other someday and send each other mail, along with video chatting and talking every day! After our two weeks at Girls State and Girls Nation, we consider ourselves some of the luckiest individuals to have been able to have had these opportunities. Just in one summer, these programs have shaped us into the individuals that we have always dreamed we would be, and showed us our true place in society. Now, more than ever, every single Girls State citizen is empowered to hold onto her place in society and seize her position in the future. We are going to change the world. Even though our time with these programs are over, we are thrilled to be able to leave our mark on the program and have new ideas and enthusiasm to make next year’s Granite Girls State the best year yet! We love our Girls State, and can’t wait share our love and the gift of being a Granite Girls State citizen to next year’s girls!

Thank you again!
Love from,
Michelle Freeman and Gabrielle Desrochers