

2017 GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION YOUTH TOUR June 7-16

How it all started

The idea to send students to Washington came from President Lyndon B. Johnson, a Texan who advocated for rural electrification and youth development. In 1957, when he was still a U.S. senator, Johnson suggested “sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents.”

This notion evolved in the 1960s into a nationwide effort to send young people on organized, fun and educational trips to the nation’s capital. Today, electric cooperatives from nearly every state send more than 1,500 youths to Washington, D.C., each June. More than 50,000 students have toured the capital thanks to their co-ops.

Texas co-ops have been upholding their commitment to the cooperative principles by educating youths and supporting their communities by sponsoring students on the trip since 1965. The trip shapes the lives of students and builds loyalty among the membership today just as it did at its inception.

When they get to Washington

Texas co-op leaders and chaperones make full use of the seven days there. On a visit to Capitol Hill, students visit with their congressional representatives and tour the Capitol. Other tour stops include:

- Supreme Court and Library of Congress
- Washington National Cathedral
- Arlington National Cemetery
- George Washington’s home at Mount Vernon
- Smithsonian Institution and Holocaust Memorial Museum
- Jefferson, Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorials
- Vietnam, World War II and Korean memorials
- Washington Monument

When they come home

Youth Tour participants return to their hometowns with a new appreciation for their cooperatives, their communities and for this great nation. They go on to become community leaders who value their roots and work hard to build a better future—some even get elected to Congress.

Here’s what six decades of Youth Tour delegates say about their Youth Tour experience:

“We were up there [at Arlington National Cemetery] after Kennedy’s assassination, and another person on the tour and I got to lay a wreath on his grave, and it was one of the most wonderful experiences in my life to this day.”

Ethel (Mabry) Ellison | Lighthouse EC, 1965

“Before leaving [the Lincoln Memorial], the Texas delegation gathered on the front steps and sang ‘America the Beautiful.’ It seemed like the only appropriate thing to do, for each of us had suddenly become aware of a closeness to our country and to each other that we never felt before.”

Paulett (Tielsch) Renfro | Fayette EC, 1970

“The [Supreme] Court was in session, and I was permitted to sit on the back row and witness oral arguments. I was in awe. My lasting impression of the tour is the openness of our government—how ordinary citizens can access justice and impact decision-makers.”

Carrie Campbell | Pedernales EC, 1985

“It was a really moving experience to witness the U.S. Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon perform at the Sunset Parade at the Iwo Jima Memorial. We had been hustling and bustling all week long, and suddenly, we were silent, captivated.”

Ashley Clary-Carpenter | Medina EC, 1996

“One of the most impactful [moments] was seeing the Washington Monument from the Lincoln Memorial, with the serene reflecting pool separating the two. Standing there and thinking about all the historical figures who had walked those same grounds.”

Stacey Kovar | Fayette EC, 2004

“Walking through [the Holocaust Memorial Museum] and seeing everything that they went through, it just caused silence. To go in there after being so loud and crazy and having fun, and just hearing that silence, it was really humbling.”

Sarah Branham | Swisher EC, 2012

