



NJDOE News

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Two High School Students Named as Delegates to U.S. Senate Youth Program

Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy today announced that a senior high school student from Burlington County and a junior from Hunterdon County have been selected as New Jersey's delegates for the 2009 U.S. Senate Youth Program in Washington, D.C.

Jeffrey R. Desilets from Shawnee High School in Medford, Burlington County, and Megan A. Partridge from Voorhees High School in Glen Gardner, Hunterdon County, were chosen to represent New Jersey at the annual leadership program for outstanding high school juniors and seniors.

"Jeffrey Desilets and Megan Partridge both are exceptional school students who excel not only in academics, but also in student government, sports, music, volunteerism and a variety of other extra-curricular activities," Commissioner Davy said. "Their educational success and commitment to helping their communities will be enriched by their participation in the U.S. Senate Youth Program. The experience that awaits them in Washington, D.C., will help these students become future dynamic leaders of New Jersey."

Every year, two students from each state and the District of Columbia travel to the nation's capitol to observe Congress and the federal government in action. Student delegates visit the White House, the Pentagon and other government and historic sites, while also meeting with U.S. Senators, cabinet officials and federal policy makers.

The program, which was established by a U.S. Senate resolution in 1962, will be held March 7 through 14, 2009. It is sponsored by the U.S. Senate and the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, with the foundation covering all costs.

Desilets and Partridge each will be awarded a \$5,000 college scholarship for their undergraduate collegiate studies.

Carrying a 4.0 grade point average, Desilets is president of the N.J. State Student Council, is the past-president of the Shawnee's student council and is a member of the school's marching band and swim and track teams. A resident of Medford, he also spent two weeks last summer volunteering in Costa Rica, and has worked as an unpaid aide at a Burlington County wildlife refuge and at a local hospital.

"I believe that the U.S. Senate Youth Program would afford me an excellent opportunity to develop a national and global perspective by meeting with our nation's leaders to learn first-hand of current national and international issues," said Desilets in his application essay. "In turn, I will be able to pass on what I learn from the program, not only through a future career in political science, but also in my current leadership roles."

Shawnee Principal Matthew Campbell praised Desilets for his efforts as a sophomore to lobby successfully to make the school district's class rank system more equitable.

"Jeff was so impressive in his presentation that he was asked by our district assistant superintendent to make the presentation to all of the district administrators, quite a daunting task for a 16-year-old," said Campbell in a recommendation letter. "... Our district soon began a commit to review the class rank policy, which used Jeff's presentation as the impetus."

Partridge, who has a 4.23 g.p.a., is her class treasurer, a peer mentor, and a member of the astronomy and key clubs, the fencing team and the marching band. A resident of Califon, she also belongs to the N.J. Music Education's All-State Women's Choir, has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and organizes textbook collections for the organization Books for Africa.

"I have found that providing leadership in service integrates all aspects of who I am and allows me to focus my energy on a cause much greater than myself; I am drawn to service because it presents a way to fuse creativity,

innovative thinking, persuasion, and passion in a way that is personally rewarding and benefits the people I help and the people I lead," said Partridge in her application essay. "Furthermore, service is one medium in which many small acts accumulate to make a big difference."

"Megan is a capable, mature young woman, a born leader and has an innate enthusiasm for making the world a better place in which to live," said Voorhees High School Principal David A. Steffan in a recommendation letter. "She explores many opportunities and feels that when she combines her passions for business, the economy, environmental science, government and politics, and music, then she will make a big difference in the world in very unique ways."

Commissioner Davy also announced the selection of two alternates in the event that a delegate cannot attend the spring program. The alternate delegates are: Charles A. Hobbs IV, a Somerdale, Camden County, resident and senior at Triton Regional High School; and Colts Neck, Monmouth County, resident Grace A. Paras, who is a senior at Colts Neck High School.

Eligible students are nominated for the program by teachers and principals, and student applications are reviewed by a panel of educators. Delegates are selected based on their leadership qualities, academic standing, community involvement, and clarity of speech and thought.