

Sen. Harriss Welcomes Metro East High School Students to the Illinois State Capitol during her Spring Youth Advisory Council

by Lynsey Whitaker
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SPRINGFIELD – State Senator Erica Harriss (56th-Glen Carbon) welcomed 45 students from 11 different high schools to the State Capitol in Springfield Monday as a part of her Spring Youth Advisory Council (YAC).

“This is a great opportunity to connect high school students with state government and is a highlight of my service as a state legislator,” said Senator Harriss. “I am thrilled to see so many high school students make the trip to Springfield for them to experience how things work and see the legislative process come to life.”

Senator Harriss’ YAC is a two-part series. High school students came together in the 56th District in the fall at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville to draft bill ideas to debate during the Spring council.

“It has been super fun and a good experience and it’s definitely something I feel like colleges and higher up schools would find unique,” said Alton High School Student, Makenzie Jones. “I think it is important for youth to be involved in government because you don’t see it as much. If we have a correct age demographic talking about how they want to be represented, then we will have a better government that better fits the entire population.”

During the Spring YAC, students are assigned into different legislative roles such as citizen proponent/opponent, lobbyist proponent/opponent, democratic senator, republican senator, and press/media to debate their proposed legislation in a mock committee hearing.

“I think any opportunity to be involved in government or leadership is very important. I think from today, it really does show how the government works and the leadership opportunities,” said Collinsville High School Student, Margot Schusky. “It is such a cool opportunity and getting to speak with Senator Harriss.”

Senator Harriss welcomed State Representative Amy Elik and former State Representative Tim Butler, who now serves as the President of the Illinois Railroad Association, to speak with students at the Capitol.

“I haven’t been inside the Capitol building before, but I have learned so much about it just being here and listening to people talk,” said Edwardsville High School Student, Mihlali Kapatamoyo. “If you live in your state, you need to know what is going on. Even if you are not an adult, you should still be involved in your government.”

High schools that participated in this year’s YAC were: [Alton High School](#), [Civic Memorial High School](#), [Collinsville High School](#), [East Alton - Wood River CHSD 14](#),

[Edwardsville High School](#), [Granite City School District #9](#), [Madison Community School District 12](#), [Marquette Catholic High School](#), [Maryville Christian School](#), [Metro-East Lutheran High School](#), [O'Fallon Township High School District 203](#), [Roxana Senior High School](#).

Refreshments and lunch for the Youth Advisory Councils were provided by Meridian Health Plan of Illinois.