



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Colorado State Board of Education

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
BEFORE THE  
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMMISSION  
DENVER, COLORADO  
APRIL 8, 2015, Part 3

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT on April 8, 2015, the  
above-entitled meeting was conducted at the Colorado  
Department of Education, before the following Board  
Members:

Marcia Neal (R), Chairman  
Angelika Schroeder (D), Vice Chairman  
Steven Durham (R)  
Valentina (Val) Flores (D)  
Jane Goff (D)  
Pam Mazanec (R)  
Debora Scheffel (R)



1                   MADAM CHAIR: The next item on the agenda is  
2 Recognition of Colorado's United States Senate Youth  
3 Scholarship winners. Commissioner?

4                   MR. HAMMOND: Thank you very much. I'll  
5 turn this over to Dr. Keith Owen. The next two things  
6 are some of the more really pleasant thing we get to do -  
7 -

8                   MADAM CHAIR: Yeah, we get to do a few fun  
9 things and this is one of them.

10                  MR. HAMMOND: -- and to honor some great  
11 kids. So with that I'll turn it over to Keith Owen.

12                  MR. OWEN: Sure. Good morning, Madam Chair.

13                  MADAM CHAIR: Yes.

14                  MR. OWEN: So today we would like to honor  
15 Serene Singh and Brandon Lee, the Colorado delegates for  
16 the 53rd annual United States Senate Youth Program.

17                         Selection for the U.S. Senate Youth Program  
18 is based on a student's outstanding abilities and  
19 demonstrated qualities of leadership in an elected or  
20 appointed high school student office, in addition to  
21 outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment  
22 to volunteer work.

23                         Two delegates are chosen from each state,  
24 the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense  
25 Education Activity. The student leaders gathered in



1 Washington, D.C., from March 7 through 14, 2015, not too  
2 long ago, for a week of intensive study of the Federal  
3 Government and, in particular, of the U.S. Senate.  
4 Speakers for the Washington Week program included the  
5 President of the United States, Barack Obama, U.S.  
6 Senators including Senator Cory Gardner from Colorado,  
7 Congressional Representatives, ambassadors, Supreme Court  
8 Justices, and NASA administrators.

9 In addition, each delegate received a \$5,000  
10 college scholarship. This scholarship, in addition to  
11 the program week in Washington, D.C., is made possible by  
12 a grant from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. Of  
13 the applications received, Serene and Brandon rose to the  
14 top by demonstrating high academic achievement,  
15 leadership ability, and a commitment to public service.

16 To give you a little background on each of  
17 the awardees, Serene Singh is a senior at Rampart High  
18 School in Colorado Springs. She currently serves as  
19 senior class president, speech and debate president, and  
20 vice co-chair for the Colorado Youth Advisory Council.  
21 She is very active in videobroadcasting, FBLA, NHS, and  
22 French Club. Serene has won a national championship,  
23 three state championships, and various district  
24 championships in speech and debate. She was also runner-  
25 up for Miss Teen Colorado and recently won the



1 prestigious full-ride Merit Boettcher Scholarship.

2           Upon graduation, Serene plans to pursue her  
3 undergraduate work with a double major in pre-law and  
4 political science. Ultimately she aspires to be  
5 appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

6           MADAM CHAIR: Very good. We like that.

7           MR. OWEN: Just a small background there.

8           Brandon Lee is a senior at ThunderRidge High  
9 School, in Highlands Ranch, and is ranked first in his  
10 class. He currently serves as the vice president of the  
11 Colorado Assn of Student Councils. He is very active in  
12 the Colorado All-State Orchestra, Boy Scouts, and the  
13 Asian-Pacific Development Center Youth Leadership  
14 Academy.

15           Following graduation, Brandon aspires to  
16 attend West Point Academy and study political science.  
17 He plans to become a lawyer and represent Asian-American  
18 immigrants.

19           Both Ms. Singh and Mr. Lee epitomize what  
20 our nation needs for the next generation of leaders -- a  
21 person who challenges himself academically, cares about  
22 people, serves their community, and is willing to do the  
23 hard work required to make our world a better place.

24           Please help me recognize Serene and Brandon  
25 as they come forward to say a few words.



1 (Applause)

2 MR. LEE: Madam Chair and members of the  
3 Board, thank you so much today for the opportunity to  
4 speak to the State Board of Education. As Dr. Owen has  
5 said, my name is Brandon Lee and I'm a senior at  
6 ThunderRidge High School in Highlands Ranch, Colorado.

7 First I would like to thank the Colorado  
8 Department of Education for choosing me as a delegate and  
9 I would really appreciate that because they have not  
10 cancelled my selection because I thought it was a  
11 mistake.

12 Secondly, my secondary education plans have  
13 changed very recently. I will be attending Harvard  
14 University this fall with an emphasis on biology and  
15 political science. But there has been no change in my  
16 passion, involvement, and interest in our government.

17 My week in Washington was a surreal and  
18 profound experience. It had been the first time in D.C.  
19 for me, and to me, the atmosphere glowed. Bustling with  
20 energy, D.C. was very dynamic and always active, quite  
21 unlike our Congress. USSYP granted to me many rare and  
22 behind-the-scenes opportunities, from eating dinner next  
23 to the Constitution to meeting President Barack Obama,  
24 president of the World Bank, Jim Kim, Colorado Senators  
25 Michael Bennett and Cory Gardner, and visiting the



1 Department of State, NASA Headquarters, the Arlington  
2 National Cemetery, the Pentagon, and many more.

3           The other 103 delegates that attended,  
4 however, was the most interesting part of the trip. The  
5 first conversation I had in D.C. regarded gerrymandering  
6 and Alabama congressional districts. Debate topics  
7 ranged from political polarization, abortion, Ferguson,  
8 political polarization, Obamacare, welfare, and did I  
9 mention political polarization?

10           Somewhat unfortunately, I honestly believe  
11 that my fellow delegates spoke the words "political  
12 polarization" at USSYP more times than I had hours to  
13 sleep. These surprised me because they had such a  
14 cynical view of Congress, and it seemed that, for the  
15 first time in my life, I found fellow young adults  
16 interested in bipartisanship more than the legalization  
17 of marijuana.

18           It's an incredibly humbling feeling to know  
19 that the best student leaders in the world had gathered  
20 into one room. I met one delegate who has made national  
21 news recently for being accepted into all eight Ivy  
22 League schools. Another one of my friends, from  
23 Wisconsin, knew more about the state Senate and  
24 gubernatorial elections in Colorado than I did myself.  
25 This led to one question: How was I selected? What if



1 the other delegates thought of me in the same way? What  
2 if I would not be remembered or respected? Or what if no  
3 one liked me?

4           It was then that I realized that this is  
5 what Barack Obama must feel on a daily basis. But  
6 President Obama reassured us that this was not the case.  
7 When he spoke to us, he emphasized key issues in our  
8 time, especially ethnic and economic inequalities. He  
9 also subtly made fun of Republicans for not believing in  
10 climate change. But most importantly, he told us, "Don't  
11 worry about who you want to be. Focus on what you want  
12 to do."

13           And with this I humbly headed back to  
14 Colorado, my home, inspired and changed, ready to end  
15 political polarization. The youth ages 18 to 29, after  
16 all, make up about 15 percent of the vote, but only about  
17 20 percent of eligible voters voted in 2014. While we  
18 are upset with Congress we are electing them in the first  
19 place. Thus, education is not simply the answer. We  
20 must use that education as a purpose, where the youth can  
21 express their ideas, fears, and goals. By implementing  
22 the invaluable ideals that the youth possess, a true  
23 impact can be made in the United States, which will  
24 reflect this large, growing constituency. Soon the youth  
25 will be responsible for America's issues as these



1 problems fall to us, and with hope, determination, and  
2 confidence, I am content with America's legacy, because  
3 I've met 103 of the best leaders who will spearhead our  
4 generation to success.

5 Thank you so much for this opportunity.

6 MADAM CHAIR: Thank you.

7 (Applause)

8 MADAM CHAIR: Thank you, Brandon. Serene?

9 MS. SINGH: Madam Chair and members of the  
10 Board, I wanted to first start off by saying thank you  
11 all so much for this prestigious opportunity. Brandon  
12 and I are both very excited to have been able to  
13 participate in such an important and rewarding  
14 experience.

15 Being selected for the United States Senate  
16 Youth Program, in and of itself, is already a truly a  
17 prestige and an honor beyond any that I can ever had  
18 imagined. I truly feel fortunate to be standing in front  
19 of you all, even today, in addition to the week that  
20 you've already been granted -- that you've already  
21 granted me.

22 I wanted to quickly address what the program  
23 itself meant to me before I dive into everything else.  
24 With that, I have a quick story.

25 It was a really cold afternoon and it had





1 just snowed a foot or so, thanks to Colorado. My older  
2 sister had went outside and said, "Hey, Serene, I think  
3 you have a package, the Hearst Foundation or something  
4 like that." And I'm not joking at all when I said I  
5 grabbed the envelope, ran upstairs, closed the door, hid  
6 the envelope, and began crying. Confused, my sister  
7 followed me and forced me to open the package, and if I  
8 was already crying of excitement, nervousness, and  
9 everything in between before, you can imagine what I felt  
10 afterwards. The way my mom describes it as  
11 (indiscernible) which literally, in Punjabi, translate to  
12 "happy beyond comprehension" is the way I was feeling.  
13 And that feeling of (indiscernible) never left me  
14 throughout the Washington Week, and honestly won't ever  
15 leave me because of my experiences and the memories that  
16 I've recollected from D.C.

17 It wasn't just meeting the President or  
18 taking creepy selfies with Senator Gardner throughout the  
19 week that left that feeling for me. In fact, it was the  
20 unique individual perspectives and doors that had opened  
21 in my way from the time I walked out of my home at  
22 Colorado Springs to the time I returned back a week  
23 later. I have learned how to walk around in six-inch  
24 heels everywhere, and that is something Brandon did not  
25 learn.



1 I learned that I am a debater. Despite  
2 being that, I can still get nervous, and beyond belief  
3 nervous when I'm asking a question to my greatest role  
4 model, Justice Steven Breyer. And I learned that the  
5 world is actually full of individuals who also, just like  
6 me, want to make a passionate change and want to evoke  
7 social justice. We just have to reach out, find them,  
8 and then ask them questions.

9 My roommate in D.C. always told me, "The  
10 best people out there are the ones who love life," and  
11 she's completely right. Passion after D.C. has become a  
12 crucial part of who I am and the way I want to live my  
13 life.

14 I won't forget the advice of one of the  
15 Senators in D.C., who said, "People won't care about how  
16 much you know unless they know how much you care." And  
17 that is one of the truest facts and that is the  
18 philosophy, coupled with (indiscernible), which I want to  
19 live with, and that equals a pretty happy Serene.

20 Upon returning from D.C., I asked my mom to  
21 give me unhealthy, fattening, greasy pizza. The  
22 Mayflower had treated me so much like royalty that I  
23 almost missed my unhealthy lifestyle. But as soon as I  
24 began eating my pizza, I asked my mom for a fork, a  
25 knife, and a napkin. And since then that's how I eat



1 everything.

2 I know the way I eat is not the most  
3 impressive lesson I learned but it shows that Washington  
4 Week changed me at a deeper, at a more inherent level  
5 than just my career path and my interests. It sparked a  
6 vision and passion in me to become a better individual so  
7 I can better serve and better represent those around me.

8 And so immediately upon arriving back to  
9 Colorado Springs, Brandon and I had begun planning the  
10 superlative awards for all the 100 delegates to enjoy and  
11 participate in, a gift from us Colorado delegates to the  
12 rest of the nation's delegates. But Washington Week, by  
13 far, is the best gift I could have asked for in this last  
14 year of high school.

15 Thank you, Mom, for hearing my nonstop  
16 chatter about political polarization and Obamacare. I  
17 know you don't care about it but I know you do care that  
18 I am passionate about it. I gained one of the sweetest,  
19 best friends who I know will be there with me through  
20 thick and thin, Brandon Lee, as well as an enormous  
21 family packed with support and relentless love, which I  
22 am extending today. My family is being extended today  
23 with all of you.

24 And with that I thank you all for being part  
25 of this incredible journey and perhaps the best week of



1 my entire life. Thank you.

2 (Applause)

3 MADAM CHAIR: Serene Brandon, we thank you  
4 both. You were wonderful representatives of Colorado.  
5 We're really excited about that. We'd like each of you  
6 to come up front and receive a certificate and stand with  
7 your Board representative. So Serene and Steve, if you  
8 would like to do this first, and the Commissioner.

9 (Pause)

10 MADAM CHAIR: Steve, if you'd come up, Deb  
11 Scheffel is your representative.

12 (Pause)

13 MADAM CHAIR: The next item on the agenda is  
14 Recognition of the 2014 Colorado Milken Educator, Carrie  
15 Harper, of Sunnyside Elementary in Durango.  
16 Commissioner, I will turn it over to you.

17 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you. She's from Durango  
18 and on the screen there. Dr. Owen will lead the  
19 presentation. But the neat thing about this particular  
20 award is an unrestricted amount of \$25,000 this  
21 individual receives from the Milken Foundation. So it's  
22 a very prestigious award and an honor to get that.

23 So, Keith.

24 MR. OWEN: Madam Chair. So this morning  
25 we're here to honor Ms. Carrie Harper. She's the 2014



1 Colorado Milken Educator. She's located in Durango,  
2 Colorado, but she's joining us by videoconference. You  
3 can see her there. There's a little bit of a delay on  
4 the screen.

5 Good morning, Carrie. Can you hear us okay?

6 MS. HARPER: Yes, I can hear you.

7 MR. OWEN: Okay. I'm going to give a little  
8 background on the award and then we're going to let you  
9 talk for a few minutes. Okay?

10 MS. HARPER: Okay. Thank you.

11 MR. OWEN: Great. Great.

12 So the Milken Educator Award provides  
13 recognition and unrestricted financial award of \$25,000  
14 to exceptional elementary and secondary school teachers,  
15 principals, and specialists who are furthering excellence  
16 in schools throughout the country. Each year,  
17 exceptional educators, considered without their knowledge  
18 by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state's  
19 Department of Education, are caught unaware with the news  
20 of their \$25,000 award, which they can use in any way.

21 I can certainly say that Carrie was caught  
22 by surprise. I had an opportunity to go down and hand  
23 her this award in Durango, and absolutely did not know  
24 what was going on and was almost, I think, fell over when  
25 we announced her name.



1                   But I can tell you that these announcements  
2                   are made in these surprise assemblies, and they're held  
3                   at the recipient's school, and they're attended by  
4                   students, peers, as well as federal, state, and local  
5                   officials and the media. The nice thing about this  
6                   opportunity was we found out that Mr. Milken actually has  
7                   a residence in Durango, and so he was able to stay at his  
8                   place and then come over and hand out the award, which  
9                   all the superintendents in the Southwest found  
10                  interesting, and I think were trying to locate where his  
11                  residence is at.

12                  So at a surprise assembly at her school, on  
13                  February 4th, Carrie Harper of Sunnyside Elementary  
14                  School and Durango School District was named the 2014  
15                  Milken Educator. She was presented with a \$25,000 check  
16                  from the Milken Family Foundation in recognition of her  
17                  exceptional work as a model teacher for the state and  
18                  nation.

19                  She has been an elementary teacher for the  
20                  past six years, and is currently teaching third grade at  
21                  Sunnyside Elementary. I also had the opportunity to  
22                  inform Superintendent Dan Snowberger that Carrie was  
23                  hired under my last year as being superintendent in  
24                  Durango, which he did not want to acknowledge but he had  
25                  to accept that was a fact.



1 Ms. Harper is a consummate professional who  
2 serves as a role model for not only her students but her  
3 colleagues and other teachers as well. Ms. Harper  
4 cultivates a love for reading as a lifelong habit. She  
5 has impact that absolutely reaches beyond her classroom.  
6 She is a data team leader at Sunnyside. She helps  
7 establish school assessments and provides professional  
8 development to her own colleagues in technology. In  
9 short, she is an outstanding teacher and absolutely is  
10 deserving of this award, this outstanding award.

11 And so now I'd like to introduce the 2014  
12 Colorado Milken Educator, Ms. Carrie Harper, and ask her  
13 to say a few words.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. HARPER: Well, thank you so much, Dr.  
16 Owen. I really appreciate those kinds words of  
17 introduction.

18 And can you all hear me okay? Can somebody  
19 just give me a wave to make sure we're good?

20 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Yep.

21 MADAM CHAIR: Gotcha.

22 MS. HARPER: Okay. Hi.

23 So I appreciate that I was hired under your  
24 being the superintendent, Dr. Owen, and your inspiration  
25 of going to CDE has been a role model for a lot of



1 teachers in our region as well, so thank you for just  
2 being an inspiration at the district level.

3 It's an incredible honor to get to speak  
4 with all of you today. I regret that I can't be there in  
5 person to thank each of you for this opportunity. And I  
6 do want to thank the Milken Family Foundation for this  
7 award. When I was surprised I think there were some  
8 people that I wasn't able to thank because I was just  
9 completely shocked, so I wanted to make sure that I thank  
10 them for this amazing award. The Milken Family  
11 Foundation gives hope and public recognition and credit  
12 to the education profession. Many thanks to family,  
13 friends, and, of course, my incredibly supportive  
14 husband, Brad.

15 I consider this award not as an individual  
16 accomplish but as a byproduct of the hard work and  
17 dedication that all teachers devote to their students,  
18 parents, and fellow colleagues. I am blessed with the  
19 support of a strong and dynamic staff at Sunnyside  
20 Elementary and District 9R. Our superintendent, Mr.  
21 Snowberger, is an outstanding superintendent who has  
22 spent countless hours meeting with teachers, parents, and  
23 students, to listen and inform them of the many changes  
24 in the education system. He is readily available and  
25 diligently seeks way to engage the public, education





1 leaders, and educators in the many changes in policies  
2 and processes.

3 Vanessa Fisher, my principal, coach, and  
4 mentor, believes in each teacher and student's abilities  
5 and developing skills. She consistently encourages all  
6 of her teachers and students to dream big and set goals  
7 which have led to an environment that maintains a high  
8 standard of excellence. I hope that you all get the  
9 privilege of getting to meet them, and if you haven't met  
10 them already.

11 Since becoming a teacher almost seven years  
12 ago I have seen education change rapidly. I believe in  
13 the change because I see how we can inspire and educate  
14 students. New quality standards for teacher evaluation  
15 shifts the focus away from the teacher and onto the  
16 reasons we are all here today -- the students. I am  
17 encouraged in the changes that have been made but not  
18 complacent in the further development that our children  
19 need in order to become lifelong learners.

20 To continue forward with the changes needed  
21 I know that relationships must be at the forefront.  
22 Michael Fullan, who wrote *Leading in a Culture of Change*,  
23 said, "Deep and sustained reform depends on many of us,  
24 not just a few who are destined to be extraordinary."  
25 His words are a reminder that we impact our students when



1 we work together. This is also echoed by Ecclesiastes  
2 4:12, "Though one may be overpowered, two can support  
3 each other. A cord of three strands is not easily  
4 divided."

5 We collaborate to bring the change needed to  
6 develop students to become lifelong learners, more 21st-  
7 century minded, having high EQs -- emotional intelligence  
8 -- being creative, and of a problem-solving mindset.

9 Again, thank you so much for this  
10 opportunity. I eagerly look forward to working with you  
11 in the future.

12 (Applause)

13 MADAM CHAIR: And, Ms. Harper, we would like  
14 that. We commend you for your exceptional work as a  
15 model teacher and we congratulate you on receiving the  
16 Milken award. This is especially important for me, as  
17 the Third Congressional Representative. I'm your  
18 congressional representative. And we'd like to present  
19 you with your certificate, and we will mail the actual  
20 certificate to you. The Commissioner and I will come  
21 over and stand by the screen. You probably can't see us  
22 but we'll send you a picture of it.

23 MS. HARPER: Thank you so much.

24 (Pause)

25 MS. HARPER: Thank you. I wish I could be



1 there with you right now. I'd give you a big squeeze, a  
2 big hug.

3 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Okay, Carrie. We're  
4 going to get ready to take a photo. Can you hear me?

5 MS. HARPER: Okay. Yes.

6 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: All right. You can put  
7 down the phone if you'd like.

8 MS. HARPER: Okay.

9 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: All right. Here we go,  
10 guys. Smile.

11 There we go. Thank you.

12 (Applause)

13 MS. HARPER: Thank you very much. You've  
14 had to get creative with this online stuff.

15 MR. OWEN: We're going to be closing out the  
16 screen now. Okay?

17 MS. HARPER: Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. OWEN: Have a great day.

19 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Bye.

20 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Congratulations.

21 MS. HARPER: Have a great day. It's so good  
22 to see you all. Thank you.

23 MADAM CHAIR: Okay. Ms. Markel, we are  
24 ready to go into executive session.

25 MS. MARKEL: An executive session has been



1 noticed for today's State Board meeting in conformance  
2 with 24-6-402(3)(a) C.R.S. to receive legal advice on  
3 specific legal questions pursuant to 24-6-402(3)(a)(ii)  
4 C.R.S. in matters required to be kept confidential by  
5 Federal Law or rules or State statutes pursuant to 24-6-  
6 402(3)(a)(iii).

7 MADAM CHAIR: Do I have a motion to convene  
8 an executive session?

9 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: So moved.

10 MADAM CHAIR: So moved. Any opposed?

11 Motion passes. The Board will convene in  
12 executive session. The public is excused. We are now in  
13 executive session, and we'll take a brief break.

14 (Meeting adjourned)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberly C. McCright, Certified Vendor and Notary, do hereby certify that the above-mentioned matter occurred as hereinbefore set out.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT the proceedings of such were reported by me or under my supervision, later reduced to typewritten form under my supervision and control and that the foregoing pages are a full, true and correct transcription of the original notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 25th day of January, 2019.

/s/ Kimberly C. McCright  
Kimberly C. McCright  
Certified Vendor and Notary Public

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